COUNTRIES IN THE EARLY MODERN WORLD

INDIA AND THE EARLY MODERN WORLD

JAGJEET LALLY

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India and the Early Modern World

India and the Early Modern World provides an authoritative and wide-ranging survey of the Indian subcontinent over the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, set within a global context.

This book explores questions critical to our understanding of early modern India. How, for instance, were Indians' religious beliefs, their ways of life, and the horizons of their learning changing over this period? What was happening in the countryside and towns, to culture and the arts, and to the state and its power? Were such experiences comparable or linked to those in other parts of the world? Can we speak of a global early modernity, therefore, within which India played an important role? Organised thematically, each chapter engages with such key issues, debates, and concepts, covering wide ground as it connects, compares, and contrasts developments witnessed across early modern South Asia to those around the globe.

Drawing on the fruits of research in numerous fields over the past fifty years and rich in detail, *India and the Early Modern World* is a pathbreaking volume written engagingly and accessibly with scholars, students, and non-specialists in mind.

Jagjeet Lally is Associate Professor of the History of Early Modern and Colonial India at University College London, where he is also Co-Director of the UCL Centre for the Study of South Asia and the Indian Ocean World. He was educated at Oxford, the London School of Economics, and then at Cambridge, where he was also a junior research fellow. His prize-winning first book is *India and the Silk Roads: The History of a Trading World* (2021).

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India and the Early Modern World

Jagjeet Lally

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Designed cover image: A painting by an Aurangabad artist from c. 1690 accompanying the manuscript of Muhammad Baha' al-Din al-'Amili's *Nan va Halva* ('Bread and Sweets'), showing a recluse chided by his dog for accepting bread from an infidel – here represented by Charles II – with a margin of real and fantastical birds. *Courtesy*: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1999.157

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To Fiona,
in deepest gratitude,
and with love

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Preface

Those careless writers who talk of Hinduism and Islam in almost monolithic terms are the targets of seemingly perennial ire, yet their critics seldom pause to concisely describe the historical development of such systems of belief for the general reader. Many of us look out from the vantage-point of imperial capitals and court centres, but Indian urban history is relatively underdeveloped, and no existing textbooks provide a survey of urbanisation, let alone new urban cultures. There is little to bridge the gap between the ever-increasing number of incredibly specialist articles delving into particular genres of Persian, Sanskrit, or Braj, on the one hand, and lengthy monographs on *The Language of the Gods* or *India in the Persianate Age*, on the other. We know more about individual artists and painters than ever before, not to mention imperial and regional styles, yet the discussion is increasingly divorced from any consideration of broader patterns of cultural change. Fine-tuning our understanding of the state and sovereignty, monarchy and kingship remains evergreen among scholars of early modern and colonial south Asia, but who has offered a concise synthesis to guide students through the weeds? As for economic history and the study of capitalism, these have largely gone out of fashion, while the history of science and knowledge in early modern India variously seems impressionistic or recondite, at best, where not put into service of narratives about India's superiority/inferiority (depending on whether one is reading nationalist or Eurocentric writers). And subjects like violence remain taboo.

This book endeavours – foolhardily, perhaps – to address these topics and problems via a sequence of thematic essays, each written with non-experts, generalists, and students in mind. This book complements others, like Richards' *The Mughal Empire*, updating yet also ranging beyond such volumes in terms of geographical, chronological, and thematic scope. Now in its second edition, *India Before Europe* is a landmark work and perhaps the best introduction to pre-colonial south Asia (c. 1000–1800 CE) that students and teachers have to hand, written by two of the most respected experts in the field and with especial strengths in cultural and political history. Nevertheless, the growth of early modern world history helps make the case for another volume, one that looks squarely at the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, over a broad range of themes, and across as much of India as is currently feasible.

Not only do existing volumes have little or nothing to say about cartography or the role of kinship in long-distance trading ventures, for instance, but they often do not engage with some of the major concepts or theories that students may have learned about in their study of the early modern world at large: vernacularisation, the Military Revolution, the Great Divergence, the advent of the Anthropocene, to take a few examples. No existing survey works help make early modern India more accessible by drawing out what is familiar from our knowledge of China, Japan, England, France, or the Ottoman world, say, before showcasing and explaining what made the subcontinent's institutions or historical experience distinctive or divergent. The global turn has showed the value of making such comparisons, yet teasing out connections is also valuable. These connections sometimes spilled out of (or, equally, had nothing to with) the Persianate, the Indo-Islamicate, or the Indian Ocean worlds. Consequently, a survey limited to only one or other of these frameworks would be inadequate, to the extent that this book glides between and beyond them as appropriate.

This book operates at five levels. At the first and most elementary level, it sets out a picture of what life was like in the past, pausing over such questions as where people lived in towns and how law and order was maintained, for instance. It also seeks, secondly, to describe how and why India was *changing* in early modern times. The significance of these experiences/phenomena and changes/processes are thrown into relief, thirdly, via comparison. This book uses comparison to tease out what is similar and different about India's experience compared to other parts of the world. Fourthly, then, this book examines whether and to what extent India's greater connection with other states and societies explains shared experiences and convergences. Finally, and as a corollary, it seeks to probe the idea of (global) early modernity. An ever-dwindling minority of Indian historians may continue to speak of a rather long 'late medieval' era lasting until the advent of colonial rule, but it has become much more commonplace to describe India from c. 1400 or 1550 to c. 1750 or 1800 as belonging in the 'early modern' period. To see whether we can speak of (global) early modernity, this book takes stock of the ways India and 'Indians' experienced, participated in, and shaped – as much as they were shaped by – processes, phenomena, and experiences regarded as hallmarks of the period.

In linking linguistic and cultural change to the development of the state, or how religious ideas and economic life were entangled with the making of political violence, to take two examples from what follows, I hope that this book will help unite numerous fields of study that remain fairly disparate to thereby provide a much more integrated picture of early modern India. Whether or not I have realised that ambition, I hope that this book will nevertheless be a useful guide to existing knowledge and, in some cases, will even help better define gaps in our knowledge and set out new subfields of inquiry. More importantly, I hope it will provide a useful point of departure for teachers, students, and even researchers venturing into the history of early modern India, and that some of the ideas provoke debate in the classroom or stimulate further inquiry. Much of what follows is an attempt to do justice to my students' thoughtful questions and often perspicacious observations, not to mention their advice – and the input and critical feedback of my colleagues – on what this book should cover and whether its arguments stacked up. In return, I have tried to structure *India and the Early Modern World* as accessibly as possible. Each chapter is divided into sections (e.g., 3.1) and often into further sub-sections (e.g., 3.1.2). Every so often, where readers' understanding of the discussion at hand might benefit from what is covered in another part of the book, a reference to the relevant section(s) is inserted as follows: (§8.2.2). There is no glossary but an extensive index, so readers can look up foreign language terms that are defined elsewhere in the book. There are also extensive footnotes, not only to point to the source of particular ideas, but also to provide references for further reading and research.

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1 Introduction

The early moderns were greedy. They had a greed for land, for riches, and for worldly goods, tastes, and pleasures. This acquisitiveness was matched by an inquisitiveness: an incessant yearning for knowledge and for beauty, for the path either to salvation or utopia, but also for fresh ways of expressing themselves and articulating their place in the world. Some of this hunger was quite real; a feasting after the hardships of era-defining plague, pestilence, and famine. Others had not a growling belly but a mind whirring with curiosity, possibly stimulated by the receipt of new ideas or even newfound intoxicants. If there is a thread linking an adventurer like Hernán Cortés with a former slave like Malik Ambar or a shadowy figure like Himmat Bahadur, those Jain ascetics invited to the Mughal court with Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit delegations to the Forbidden City in Beijing, it was that they lived in a world with a culture of increasingly restless (and sometimes forced) mobility.[1]

Occurring by stages, 'Occidental breakout' began in the decades following the Black Death, hastening after Europeans 'discovered' the Americas and a direct maritime route to Asia in the 1490s. One consequence was the so-called 'Columbian Exchange' between the New and Old worlds, from which a form of capitalism gradually developed and spread across the globe in interaction with its regional or local cousins.[2] The period following the pestilence (pandemic?) of the Black Death and the cessation of Timur's world conquests, to the global warfare of the eighteenth century and the onset of the Industrial Revolution, witnessed the expanding scale and quickening pace of movement that both spurred and satisfied contemporaries' rapaciousness. This meant a

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[1] Faroqhi, *Travel*, offers a fabulously rich picture of employment and (im)mobility in the early modern Ottoman Empire. On the many motivations and pressures linked to the relocation of free and forced labour, see: Paquette, *Seaborne Empires*, 131–44. See, also: §5.2.

[2] On the 'Occidental breakout' of the Portuguese and Spanish into the Atlantic to Africa, the Americas, and Asia: Darwin, *Tamerlane*, 50–65, 97–99, where the author notes that the role of this development in the rise of Euro-American hegemony in the global system was not inevitable and immediate but came a few centuries later. See, also: Belich, 'Black Death'. Sussman, 'Black Death', argues that India was left relatively unscathed, despite being plugged into those maritime and terrestrial trade routes via which plague is thought to have passed across Eurasia.

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gradual yet palpable breaking away from the past, a period with its own distinctive character even as it laid the foundations for modernity – a period we call the 'early modern'. Can we discern such a break in the historical experience of India's many peoples and the communities, societies, and states of which they were a part? Can we place India within the portrait of early modernity just sketched out? Such questions are the province of this book.

The research and writing of *India and the Early Modern World* coincided with a twenty-first century pandemic of truly global proportions – global in both the reach of a new virus and the ramifications of quarantines and lockdowns upon a planet and its peoples more connected than ever before. Our recent experience highlights how rapidly phenomena can be transmitted from one part of the world to others, how this can lead to broadly similar patterns of experience in far-flung locales, but also how phenomena and their effects can be transmuted as they travel across distances, and how the distinctiveness of local approaches and the specificity of place – whether in terms of demography, government, society, culture, and so forth – can mediate or inflect experiences and outcomes in different areas. Our recent troubles are testament, therefore, to the need for 'global history' approaches that identify connections and make comparisons a part of the examination of global phenomena, while being alert to the limits of connectivity, the enduring power of locality, and the role of 'endogenous' developments.

Keeping all this in mind, this book examines India's place within the set of shared experiences constitutive of early modernity to identify how India was shaped by some of the same pressures of the period experienced elsewhere, or else vitally contributed to those phenomena seen as its hallmarks.[3] At the same time, it contrasts aspects of India's experience with those of other parts of the world, whether to bring to light how and why India's experience was distinctive or to demonstrate the limits of shared experience and, ultimately, the limits of the global early modern world itself. With these goals in view, this chapter sets out the necessary context and conceptual frameworks for the rest of this book, starting with a description of the Indian political landscape in the century or so immediately following Timur's invasion in 1398. What follows is a panoramic survey of the steadily expanding frontiers of state power over the varied landscapes of south Asia, culminating in the Mughal Empire and its successor states. For this process brought more and more Indians under kingly – or even imperial – authority, not to mention their yoking to the plough.

1.1 India after Timur: Indian States, c. 1400–c.1600

Also known as Temür, Timur-i Lang, 'Timur the Lame', and Tamerlane, Timur was born in the 1330s into a lesser clan of the Chagatai khanate, one of the four divisions of the erstwhile Mongol world empire of Chinggis or Genghis Khan (d. 1227). By 1370, he was master of the Chagatai khanate, and thus of Transoxiana (the area across the river Oxus). Timur's conquest of central Eurasia was in motion from 1380, with present-day Iran and Iraq, the Caucasus and southern Russia brought under his rule. Timur also pushed further west and, in 1402, defeated the Ottomans and took the Ottoman ruler as his hostage, triggering the Ottoman interregnum and civil war that lasted until Mehmed I was crowned in 1413, by which time Timur himself was long dead.[4] Timur's prospect had also extended southward to the Indian subcontinent's great riches, a prize he had taken in 1398 after launching a devasting raid into north India. Some of the effects of Timur's plunder raid were immediate, but others – such as state formation triggering a new political cycle (see: Chapter 7) or a sharper articulation of identity spurring vernacularisation (Chapter 9) – unfolded over the early modern centuries.[5]

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[3] How the early modern world is conceived, and India situated within it in this book, owes something to pioneering approaches, e.g., Richards, 'Early Modern India'. See, further: §11.2.

1.1.1 Landscapes and Populations

Who did Timur have to defeat to take India's riches? What did the political organisation of late medieval India look like? Today, in very remote pockets of the subcontinent, there remain peoples whose habitations may fall within the territorial boundaries of the nation-states of Afghanistan and Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, even though their lives and livelihoods are little affected by such sovereign authority. Their number are shrinking, however, as processes of bringing the land and its people under the jurisdiction of some or other state are still culminating, thanks to transport and communications technologies that have shrunk distance and made the state's surveillance and control more effective.[6] These processes quickened in the nineteenth century under the aegis of the colonial state but are centuries long and built upon much earlier foundations.

The Jats, for example, shifted at some time over the eleventh to sixteenth centuries from pastoralism to settled agriculture in Punjab, but tribal or pastoral societies quite probably constituted a far greater share of even the highly centralised Mughal Empire than courtiers and later historians have had us believe. Such groups were not remote or isolated, however, exhibiting varying degrees of nomadism or pastoralism versus settlement and differing degrees and kinds of interaction with areas and peoples more systematically under the yoke of a centralised state (e.g., exchanging forest or pastoral products for those of the plains, providing seasonal labour). Some were gradually 'absorbed' into settled agriculture, like the Jats, while others acquired landed status that

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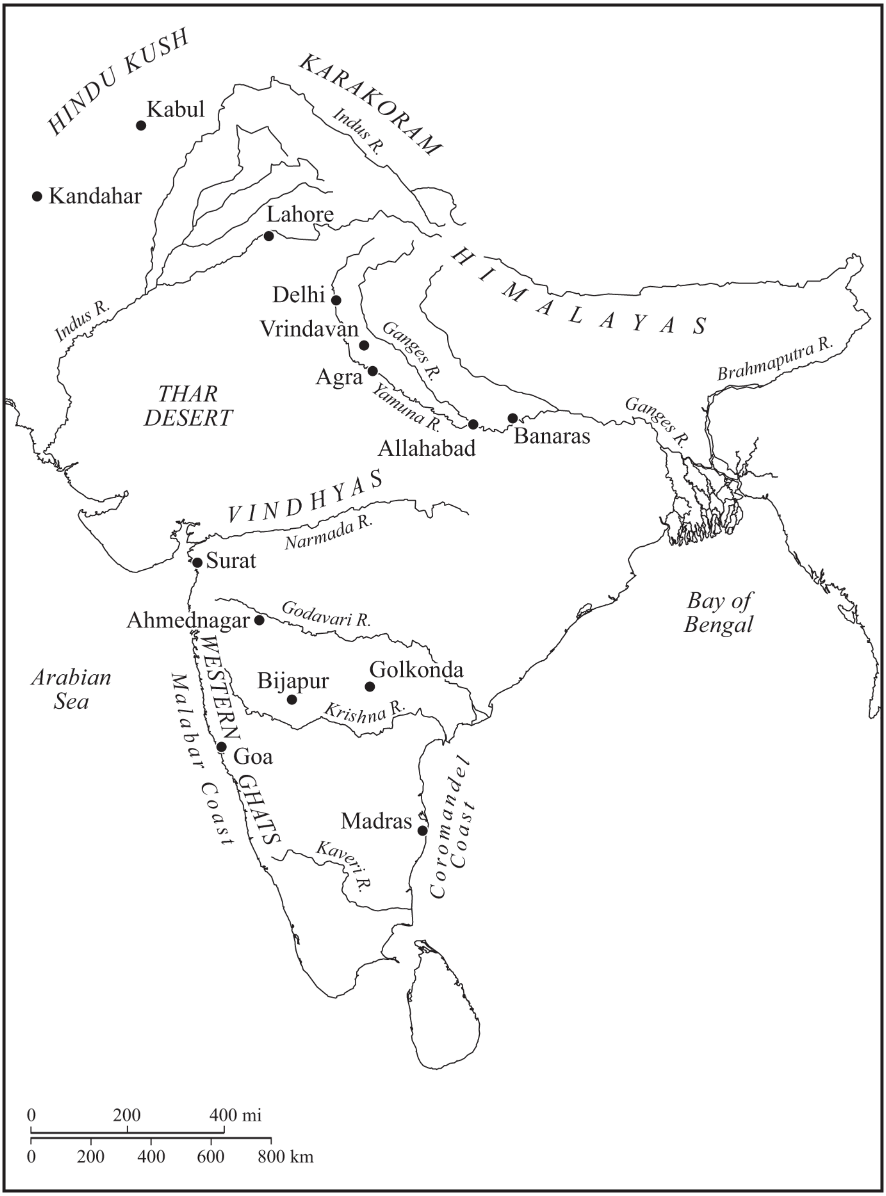
[4] Darwin, *Tamerlane*, 4–6.

[5] For a similar appreciation of Timur's impact: Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 99–141, 217–24. See, also: Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 22–28, for a rich yet succinct overview of political change in north India after Timur's invasion.

[6] Scott, *Art*, with a statement about the role of technology on xii.


HINDU KUSH
KARAKORAM
Kabul
Kandahar
Indus R.
Lahore
Delhi
Vrindavan
Agra
HIMALAYAS
Ganges R.
Yamuna R.
Allahabad
Banaras
Brahmaputra R.
Ganges R.
Indus R.
THAR DESERT
VINDHYAS
Narmada R.
Surat
Ahmednagar
Godavari R.
WESTERN GHATS
Bijapur
Golkonda
Krishna R.
Arabian Sea
Malabar Coast
Goa
Madras
Kaveri R.
Coromandel Coast
Bay of Bengal
0 200 400 mi
0 200 400 600 800 km

Map 1A India

they were able to pass on to their heirs (a process called 'Rajputisation' by one historian of north Indian society).[7] Up to the late eighteenth century, they maintained a broad range of relationships with the state, from integration to fierce resistance.[8] Thus, when we picture states and empires in pre-modern India or elsewhere, we ought to see the state not as shaded in solid red on the map, but as a lumpy entity with its power thicker in the agrarian heartlands and thinner or more contested – and its boundaries much blurrier – in forested, desert, or upland zones.[9]

Around 1400, some areas remained either uninhabited and unsettled, or else settled but not subject to a larger political authority than that of a local clan or tribe or other collectivity. They were most likely to be found beyond the desert frontier or forest line.[10] There was far more jungle to be found in 1400 than 1600 or 1800 or the present day due to the steady clearing of the land to make way for subsistence and then commercial agriculture, and the deforestation of land for its timber and other natural resources – processes that are also centuries-long and were accelerating in the early modern period (see: §5.1). Or, to put it differently, as little as 20 or 30 per cent of the land in south and southeast Asia was settled and densely populated at the beginning of the sixteenth century; people lived surrounded by swathes of forest, as they did in other parts of Afro-Eurasia, too.[11] Jungle can still be found in the uplands of the northeast and the centre of the Indian peninsula – even as vast tracts have been steadily cleared to make way for tea gardens and plantations – but was once also found in parts of Punjab in the northwest, such as the Lakhi Jungle.[12] Upland pastures and deserts were likewise beyond the pale of populous settlement. Unlike jungle, however, deserts have become larger in consequence of environmental change and ecologically damaging alterations to land use. Desertification can also be linked to the mobility of India's great rivers. For instance, the Indus was very susceptible to changes in its major tributaries, most especially the highly mobile Sutlej, which shifted several times during the early modern period, once or twice swerving through the parched lands of Bikaner and reaching the sea at its own mouth.[13] The Thar, India's largest desert, is spread over Rajasthan and parts of the present-day provinces of Gujarat, Haryana, and Punjab. Those peoples who lived in such environments – forests, uplands and deserts – by necessity travelled to larger centres of

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[7] Kolff, *Naukar*, 71–74.

[8] Singh, 'Conformity and Conflict'; Alam, *Crisis*, 140.

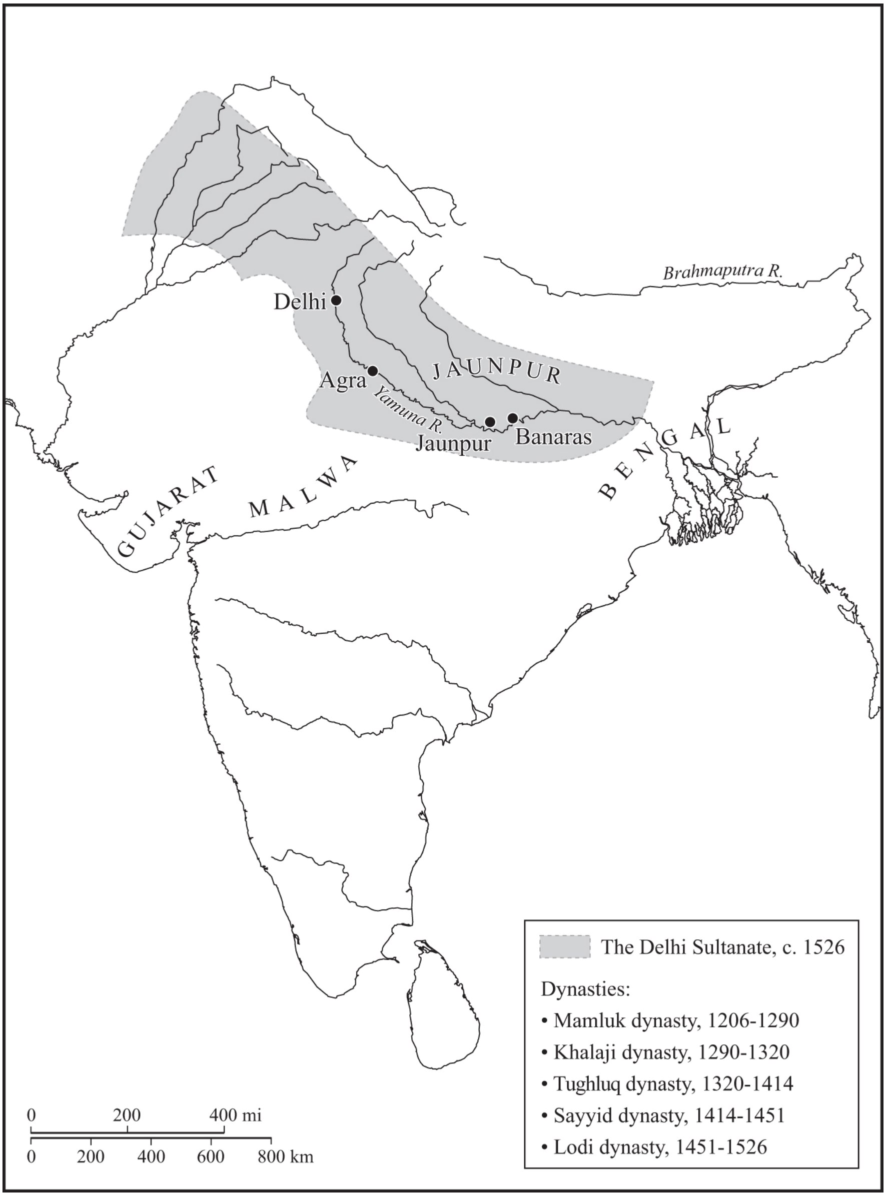
[9] Stein, *Vijayanagara*, 21.

[10] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 1–24, for a rich survey of the variety of settled landscapes and the incursion of settlements into scrublands and jungles. Valuable insight into the 'politics of wildness' can be found in: Skaria, 'Being *Jangli*'. See, also: Singh, 'Forests'; Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity*.

[11] Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 38.

[12] Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 76, 80.

[13] Lally, *India and the Silk Roads*, 32–33.


Brahmaputra R.
Delhi
Agra
Yamuna R.
JAUNPUR
Jaunpur
Banaras
BENGAL
GUJARAT
MALWA
The Delhi Sultanate, c. 1526
Dynasties:
• Mamluk dynasty, 1206-1290
• Khalaji dynasty, 1290-1320
• Tughluq dynasty, 1320-1414
• Sayyid dynasty, 1414-1451
• Lodi dynasty, 1451-1526
0 200 400 mi
0 200 400 600 800 km

Map 1B The Delhi Sultanate: Lodi Rule on the Eve of the Mughal Conquest population for trade, exchanging the specialist productions from their locales with those of plains societies.[14]

For the most part, settled populations were found in the plains where seasonal rains were supplemented by river water that could be channelled into irrigation canals, thereby making cultivation possible over a large area through the year, an additional benefit being the rich alluvium brought down from the uplands. Forming the northern limit of the Indian subcontinent, the Karakoram range and the Himalayas are the source of two of India's great river systems (see: Map 1A). Draining into the Arabian Sea and the western Indian Ocean is the Indus, whose tributaries – the Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej – give the region its name, Punjab (lit. 'five rivers'). Draining into the Bay of Bengal and the eastern Indian Ocean are the Yamuna and the Ganges, their confluence at Allahabad/Prayagraj being a sacred centre holy to Hindus, and which are joined by numerous other tributaries to form one of the most fertile and densely populated parts of India. Already major capitals by the Middle Ages, Delhi and Agra had grown beside the Yamuna, a testament to its strategic importance. From their headwaters in the upland peninsular spine known as the Western Ghats, the Godavari, Krishna, and Kaveri rivers each flow into the Bay of Bengal. Separating these northern and southern rivers is the Narmada, which originates in the central Indian plateau and which is often taken as a kind of dividing line between north and south India.

1.1.2 North India: the Delhi Sultanate and its Successors

Generally, population density increased downstream, and was greatest on the fertile deltas. Greater densities made it easier for rulers to tax the populace and thereby raise revenues to build the edifice of state power – a bureaucracy, a military, and a political centre or capital, which often played home to the royal court. Thus, while a few villages or a larger area of countryside and town might be under the authority of a local ruler, whether a strongman or large landlord, such men might be incorporated within a kingdom or a hereditary royal dynasty, in turn. Around 1400, there were two important polities whose authority was larger still in the sense of wielding authority over hereditary dynasties and kingdoms. In the north was the Delhi Sultanate, the collective name for five successive dynasties from the early thirteenth to the early sixteenth centuries whose rulers for the most part made Delhi their capital: the Mamluk, Khalaji, Tughluq, Sayyid, and Lodi dynasties (Map 1B). Under the Tughluq ruler, Alauddin Khalji, campaigns into peninsular India expanded the reach of Sultanate authority to its greatest extent by the mid-fourteenth century, but at some cost. The Tughluq polity steadily became more territorially compact, while its military power was so depleted that barely 10,000 cavalrymen were mustered in defence against Timur's devasting invasion in 1398. Timur sacked the capital, seizing its valuable hordes and impoverishing north India. The Tughluq state survived until c. 1412 and was succeeded in Delhi by the rule of the Sayyids (1414–51) and then the Lodis (1451–1526).[15]

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[14] The fear of mobile peoples who lived in these spaces, but migrated seasonally for trade with plains societies, sharpened after the Indian Rebellion, accelerating the (forced) settlement of such groups and the control of their homelands; see: Markovits, Pouchepadass, and Subrahmanyam, eds., *Society and Circulation*.

Before Timur's invasion, a number of regional kingdoms were already starting to make their appearance, often at the expense of the Delhi Sultanate, and often owing a debt to mobile Sufi leaders and footloose Muslim diasporas.[16] After Timur left, this process reached its climax, for the Bengal, Gujarat, Jaunpur, and Malwa sultanates had all come into being. Bengal's distance from Delhi and its landscape of thick jungle and manifold intersecting rivers meant the Delhi sultans faced the perennial difficulty of maintaining their control, especially when the officers appointed to rule Bengal on their behalf began asserting their independent authority; so came to be the Ilyas Shahi dynasty (1342–1493, with a brief interregnum in the early fifteenth century). By the late fifteenth century, the Hussain Shahi dynasty (1493–1538) had taken control.[17] Gujarat was another seaboard state, although a little closer to Delhi than Bengal. It also seceded from Tughluq rule relatively unchallenged, with Zafar Khan assuming the title of Muzaffar Khan in 1407. His grandson and successor founded the city of Ahmedabad in 1411, with the dynasty's rule lasting until 1573 despite numerous challenges from neighbouring polities and the Portuguese, who first landed on India's western coast in 1498.[18]

Jaunpur lay between the realm of the Delhi Sultanate and Bengal, and its rulers – the Sharqi dynasty – broke ties with Delhi in 1396, prior to Timur's campaign. Jaunpur territory was former crown land, and so its existence represented a grave material loss to the Tughluq and Sayyid rulers. Sikandar Lodi sacked Jaunpur and effectively extinguished Sharqi authority in 1494.[19] Malwa, in central India, was another polity established by an erstwhile Tughluq officer who severed his allegiance to the centre. It bordered the authority of the Bahmani sultanate in the Deccan, as well as Gujarat and Mewar (Udaipur).[20] Mewar deserves special mention, being one of the pre-eminent Rajput kingdoms and because it lay in southeastern Rajasthan on strategic routes to Delhi and the Ganges as well as Gujarat and its ports. Its rise took place under Rana Kumbha (r. 1433–68) – leader of the Sisodiyas, one of the most prestigious Rajput lineages – who fought the Gujarat and Malwa rulers to carve out his territory. Its other neighbours included the powerful Rajput states of Marwar (Jodhpur) and Amber (Jaipur), established by the Rathores and Kacchwahas; like the Sisodiyas, theirs were ruling lineages of some pedigree by the post-Timurid period.[21]

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[15] Kumar, 'Delhi Sultanate' is an excellent primer. See, also: Asher and Talbot, *India*, 40–53.

[16] Digby, 'Before Timur Came'. See, also: §3.1.1.

[17] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 32–70.

[18] Sheikh, *Forging*; Balachandran, *Narrative Pasts*.

[19] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 112–13.

[20] Ibid, 113–15.

[21] Ibid, 115–16.

1.1.3 South India: Vijayanagara and the Deccan Sultanates

Many of these changes were prefigured in south India, specifically the area known as the Deccan. This is often a fairly broad category, used to describe lands south of the Vindhya range or the Narmada river up to the banks of the Kaveri, within which the modern-day states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha (formerly Orissa) form an intermediate zone of sorts, separating everything to its south from the Indus and Gangetic valley zones of the north. Of course, this is a northerner's perspective; a narrower or more specific usage confines itself to the plateau extending over the south and west of the Indian peninsula containing the Krishna and Godavari river basins (and thus excluding the Carnatic), while other uses of 'Deccan' and 'Deccani' revolve not around terrain but the identities of people found in the south (described below).[22]

The massive yet short-lived expansion of the Tughluq sultanate in the early fourteenth century involved the southward march of its armies and the conquest of parts of the Deccan. Alauddin Bahman Shah (d. 1358) revolted against his Tughluq master and carved-out the Bahmani Sultanate from some of the Tughluq lands in the Deccan. This was an instance of something larger: as the control and influence of the Delhi sultans over the south waned, those regional kingdoms that had been flattened by the armies from the north began re-emerging, while entirely new states also took shape around the mid-fourteenth century. Of the latter, the most significant was the Vijayanagara Empire (Map 1C), a collective term for the rule by four successive dynasties – the Sangama, Saluva, Tuluva, and Aravidu houses – from the 1330s to the 1640s, their capital for the most part at the new urban centre called Vijayanagara (lit. 'City of Victory').[23]

The Sangama dynasty expanded their authority slowly and steadily from the kingdom established by the Sangama brothers, Harihara I (r. 1336–56) and Bukka Raya I (r. 1356–77), with members of the extended family exercising their own personal authority over the constituent parts of the Vijayanagara polity. These domains, extending from the central and southern parts of present-day Karnataka to the southern part of Andhra Pradesh, were more rapidly enlarged in the first half of the fifteenth century by Devaraya II (r. 1432–46); Sangama rule then stretched from coast to coast. The Vijayanagara Empire thus became the largest polity ever created in south India, extending over most of the peninsula south of the Tungabhadra river. This expansion brought its rulers into conflict with the Bahmani sultans, whose sway was to the north of the Krishna river. There were three areas of conflict between these states: the Raichur *doab* (a term for the area between two rivers, the Tungabhadra and Krishna in this case), the fertile Krishna-Godavari river delta, and the western coast

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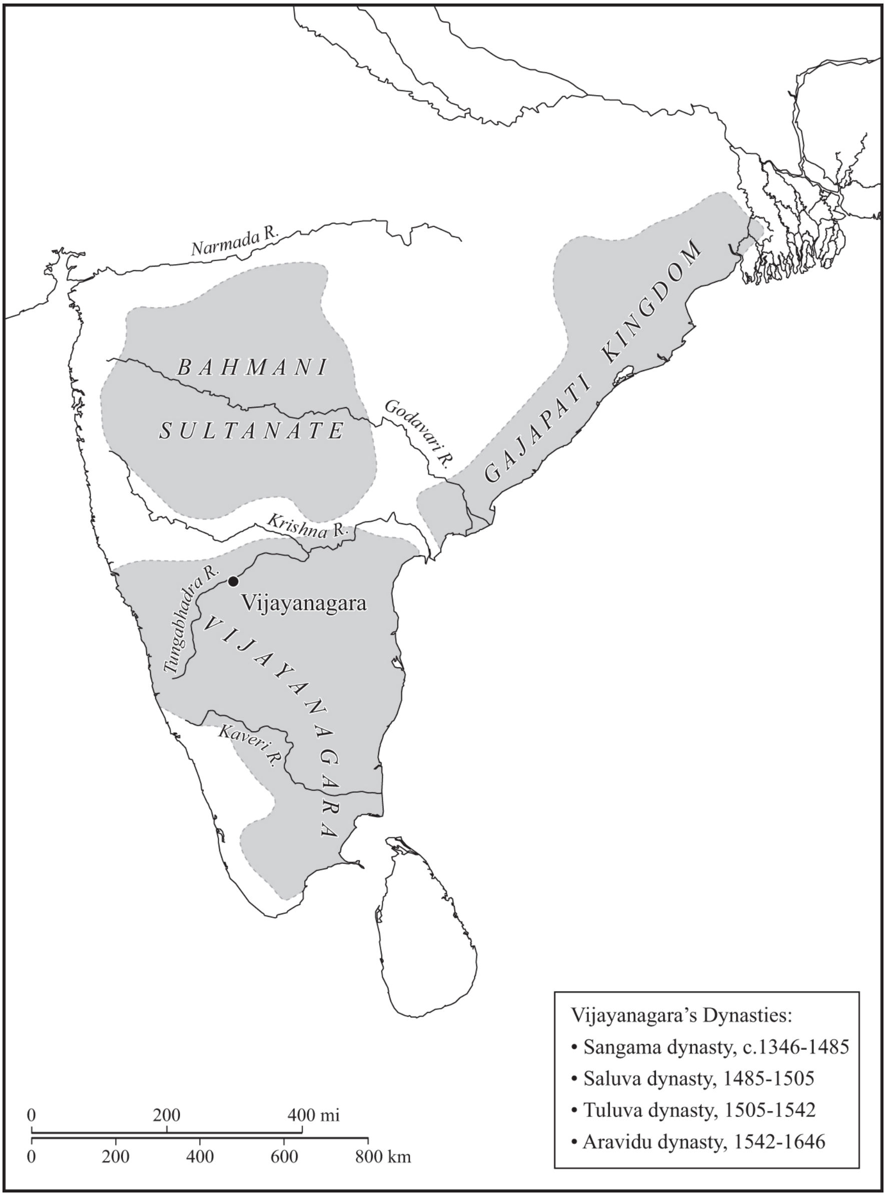
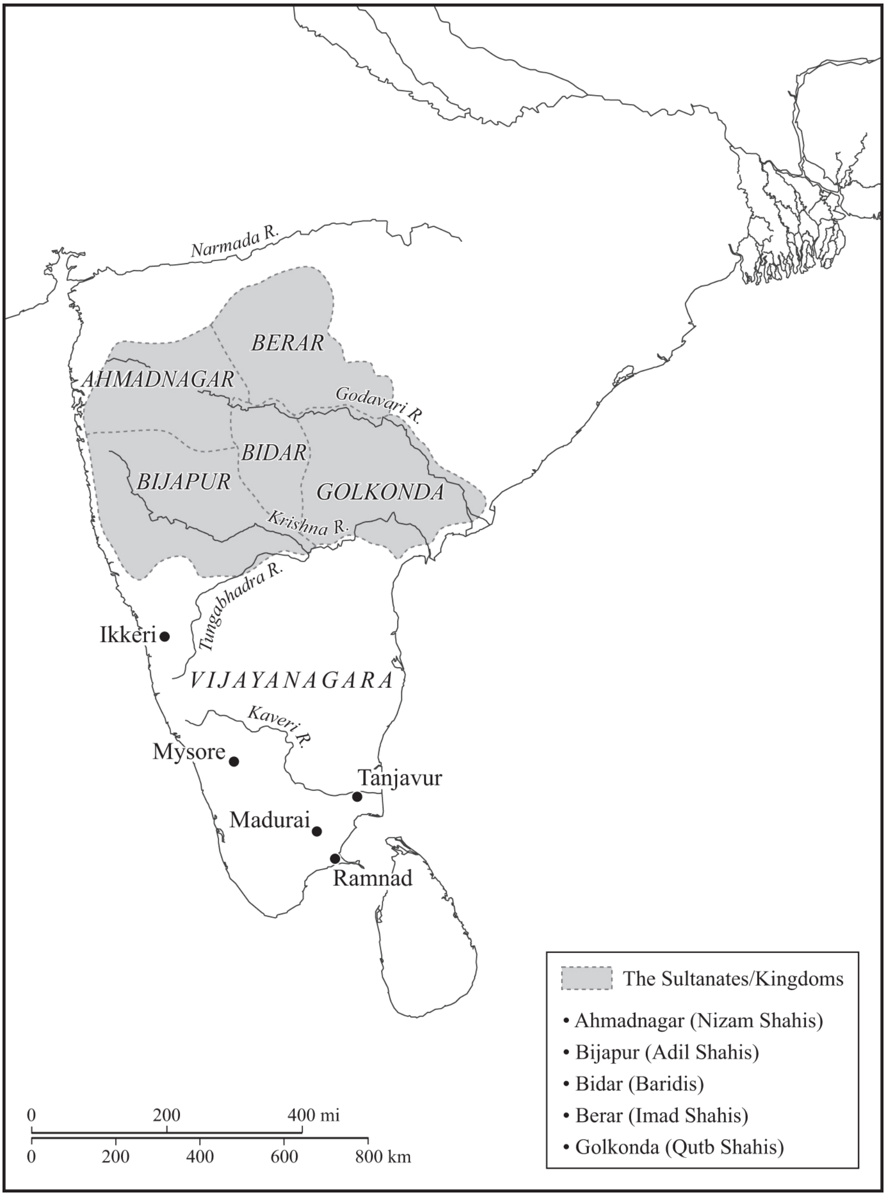
[22] Sohoni, *Deccan Sultanate*, 1–8.
[23] Michell, *Southern India*, 9–16.


Narmada R.
BAHMANI
SULTANATE
Godavari R.
GAJAPATI KINGDOM
Krishna R.
Tungabhadra R.
Vijayanagara
VIJAYANAGARA
Kaveri R.
Vijayanagara's Dynasties:
• Sangama dynasty, c.1346-1485
• Saluva dynasty, 1485-1505
• Tuluva dynasty, 1505-1542
• Aravidu dynasty, 1542-1646
0
200
400 mi
0
200
400
600
800 km

Map 1C Vijayanagara at its Zenith


Narmada R.
BERAR
AHMADNAGAR
Godavari R.
BIDAR
BIJAPUR
GOLKONDA
Krishna R.
Tungabhadra R.
Ikkeri
VIJAYANAGARA
Kaveri R.
Mysore
Tanjavur
Madurai
Ramnad
The Sultanates/Kingdoms
• Ahmadnagar (Nizam Shahis)
• Bijapur (Adil Shahis)
• Bidar (Baridis)
• Berar (Imad Shahis)
• Golkonda (Qutb Shahis)
0
200
400 mi
0
200
400
600
800 km

Map 1D The Deccan Sultanates and the Nayaka Kingdoms and its ports (where Arabian, Persian, and central Asian warhorses were available for purchase).[24]

Only when Devaraya II welcomed military entrepreneurs skilled in cavalry warfare could the Vijayanagara state compete effectively with their neighbour. That said, Devaraya II's successors struggled to compete with both the Bahmani sultans and the Gajapati rulers of a growing kingdom founded in the 1430s in what is today northeastern Andhra and southern Odisha; each made considerable gains at the expense of the Vijayanagara Empire. The result was the deposition of the Sangamas by the short-lived Saluva dynasty (1485–1505), and then of the latter by the Tuluvas. The second Tuluva king, Krishnadeva Raya (r. 1509–29), worked to consolidate the state, reconquer lost territories, and expand the empire, making it the preeminent power in the south. Besides their defeat of the Gajapatis, the Tuluva rulers were buoyed by the shattering of the Bahmani Sultanate into a number of new successor states over the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, a process often spearheaded by the sultanate's own governors and ministers.[25]

The resulting states were centred on Khandesh (ruled by a dynasty that became known as the Faruqi Khans) and Berar (the Imad Shahis) in the north of the Deccan; Ahmadnagar (under the Nizam Shahis) to the west; Bidar (the Baridis) on the central plateau; Bijapur (under the Adil Shahis) in the southern Deccan; and Golkonda (the Qutb Shahis) in the eastern Deccan. They are collectively known as the 'Deccan Sultanates' (Map 1D).[26] They were competitive, for each sought (unsuccessfully) to enlarge its authority over the entire Deccan, save for their collaboration in 1565 against the Vijayanagara Empire.[27] The Aravidu family ruled in the name of the Tuluva kings from the 1540s until 1565, when Tuluva defeat by the combined forces of the Deccan Sultanates at the Battle of Talikota allowed the Aravidus to seize power. They were able to cling onto power for less than a century, although ruling a far more compact state. A raft of new kingdoms emerged in the Vijayanagara Empire's place, described as its successor states because of the continuities between old and new.[28] These were the *nayaka* states (i.e., those led by *nayaks* – governors or lords), notable among which were Mysore, Madurai, Ikkeri, Ramnad, and Tanjavur (Map 1D). They survived until around the late seventeenth century, when many were absorbed either by the Deccan Sultanates or else a little later by the expanding Mughal and Maratha empires.[29]

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[24] Although it now seems a little dated, Stein's *Vijayanagara* remains a reliable guide and is still much cited.

[25] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 78–104, offers a compact yet colourful survey of fifteenth-and sixteenth-century Vijayanagara. Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam, 'Ideologies', 210–225, examines Krishnadeva Raya's imperial ideology.

[26] Michell and Zebrowski, *Deccan Sultanates*, 8–18, offers a digestible guide. For a recent, rich analysis: Fischel, *Local States.*

[27] Fischel, *Local States*, 83–85.

[28] See, for example: Bes, 'Sultan', for analysis of continuities relating to dress and statecraft.

Despite centuries of rule by the Muslim lineages of the Delhi and Deccan sultanates, the population of the south – like that of the north – was predominately what we would call 'Hindu' (§2.1). *Dakhni* (Deccani) is the name given to Muslims belonging to those conquest groups who migrated from central Asia and Iran first to north India and then further south.[30] (Dakhni also refers to the regional language that developed in this period; see: §9.2.2). *Ghariban* ('foreigners') denoted even newer Muslim emigrants from Iran and the Arab and Turkish lands under the control of the Ottoman Empire.[31] They migrated because of the opportunities for mercenary or bureaucratic service, and because of the demand for litterateurs and learned (religious) men, engineers, artists, and workmen, contributing tremendously to the dynamism of early modern south Indian states in return.[32] To their number can be added the group known as *Habshis*: Africans from the east coast (present-day Ethiopia and Somalia), mostly shipped as military slaves, of whom some attained independence and even great power, office, and status, such as Malik Ambar. Alongside Hindus, the Dakhnis and *Habshis* formed the political and social elite of south India, whose existence was succoured by the agrarian surplus the bulk of the population laboured to produce, notably cotton, millet, rice, and sugar, as well as other valuable crops such as indigo and pepper.

1.2 Timur *Redux*: Mughal Rule to c. 1707

1.2.1 Climate and the Little Ice Age

Geography and environmental factors have been important to the scholarship of André Wink, Jos Gommans, and others shaping what has been presented so far in this chapter and what follows in the rest of this book.[33] 'Natural' factors play an important part in explaining not only the expansion of the agrarian frontier (Chapter 5) and the elaboration of the state's revenue-bureaucratic apparatus, which permitted greater centralisation (Chapter 7). They also explain the interaction between the settled and mobile worlds of the wet and dry zones, which were implicated in everything from the pattern of trade to the siting of capital cities and the character of urbanism (Chapter 4), the production of hard power or violence (Chapter 6), and ultimately the nature and dynamics of the state in south Asia. Not only did geography, environment, and climate give form over a millennium or so to what Wink calls the 'Indo-Islamic world'; short-term fluctuations in each of these factors during the early modern period engendered some of those phenomena and developments that mark out this era as distinctive (§5.1).

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[29] Michell, *Southern India*, 16–22, for a concise guide. See, also: Fischel, *Local States*, 192–235; Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam, 'Ideologies', 225–32.

[30] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, especially 67–70, on the shifting meanings of *Dakhni*. For more detail: Fischel, *Local States*, especially 70–74.

[31] For a useful, critical discussion of the terms used to describe this group, see: Fischel, 'Ghariban'.

[32] Overton, ed., *Iran*, contains a rich survey of the topic.

[33] See, most recently: Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, for a synthesis putting historical geography centre-stage. Other references follow throughout this book.

Across the northern hemisphere, climatic cooling and heating interacted with other environmental factors to shape broadly common patterns of change in agrarian life. A jump-start to agrarian expansion due to favourable climate in the ninth to thirteenth centuries was followed by a highly variable period of more adverse weather (including cooling or drying), then a milder, slightly more agriculturally propitious period up to the late sixteenth century. After this warming and plenty came cooling and upheaval linked to volcanic mega eruptions (as in 1580, 1586, and 1593 in Indonesia and Peru, and then through the latter half of the next century), which had their own cooling effects but also contributed to more severe El Niño events.[34] The combination of volcanic activity, weather events related to the North Atlantic Oscillation and El Niño Southern Oscillation, and changes in the sun's energy output gave rise to the so-called early modern Little Ice Age. This disturbed farming from the 1560s or 1570s and most markedly – but in two phases – in the decades either side of the mid-seventeenth century before, finally, another mild and productive period commenced from about the second-quarter of the eighteenth century.[35] The bleaker periods saw reduced agricultural production but also epidemics, in turn creating social dislocation and political crisis. The impacts of the turbulence in the seventeenth century were formerly described by some European historians such as Geoffrey Parker as a 'general crisis' in which poor harvests and popular hardship triggered unrest and social disorder leading to the toppling of political regimes and even regicide.

Using fresh scientific data and evidence from outside Europe, Parker has not only resuscitated his much-debated thesis of a European 'general crisis'; he enlarges it into a 'global crisis' afflicting the northern hemisphere from England to China.[36] But nowhere was the suffering as severe or prolonged, nor the landscape so deeply scarred as in parts of the Ottoman Empire. The empire's semi-arid expanses were far more vulnerable to even slight environmental change, so that the combination of fierce cold and the worst drought in six centuries with the demands of a state at war helped unleash a crisis of such severity that it would take a century or so to recover, according to recent work by Sam White.[37] Belying the general pattern, in other words, were numerous conjunctural factors that shaped different regions' or states' varied experience of climatic upheaval. Mughal India, too, has been drawn into this analysis, not least because of the devastating famines of the 1630s, which hit Gujarat especially hard. In contrast to their counterparts in other parts of the world, however, the Mughal dynasty came out largely unscathed.[38]

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[34] Jenkins, *Climate, Catastrophe, and Faith*, 90.

[35] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 103, 106.

[36] Parker, *Global Crisis*.

[37] White, *Climate of Rebellion*, which is richer and more complex than can be adequately summarised here.

1.2.2 The 'Great Mughals'

But who were the Mughals? – and why are they important? The first Mughal was Zahir al-Din Muhammad Babur (1483–1530), who was born in central Asia and was a fifth-generation patrilineal descendant of Timur and a fifteenth-generation matrilineal descendant of Chinggis Khan. By the time Babur came into the world, Timur's empire had fragmented, and Timurid and Mongol kin fought one another to wrest a larger domain for themselves. Babur entered the fray aged eleven. Ten years later and already something of a vagabond, he was driven out of his homeland in the Fergana Valley, seizing the Timurid outpost of Kabul in 1504, which provided him and his growing band of followers a secure base and considerable military resources. In the 1520s, they began regular raids in Punjab as Babur's attention turned to the larger prize of north India, also known as Hindustan. Invited by the Afghan rulers of Punjab to invade, Babur fought and defeated the last of the Lodi sultans in 1526, inaugurating Mughal rule over India.[39]

The Mughal Emperors, 1526–1748

Babur, r. 1526–30
Humayun, first r. 1530–40
interregnum under Sher Shah Suri
Humayun, second r. 1555–56
Akbar, r. 1556–1605
Jahangir, r. 1605–27
Shah Jahan, r. 1628–58
Aurangzeb, r. 1658–1707
Bahadur Shah, r. 1707–12
Jahandar Shah, r. 1712–13
Farrukhsiyar, r. 1713–19
Rafi' ul-Daula, r. 1719
Rafi' ul-Darjat, r. 1719
Muhammad Shah, r. 1719–48
Mughal line continues to 1858

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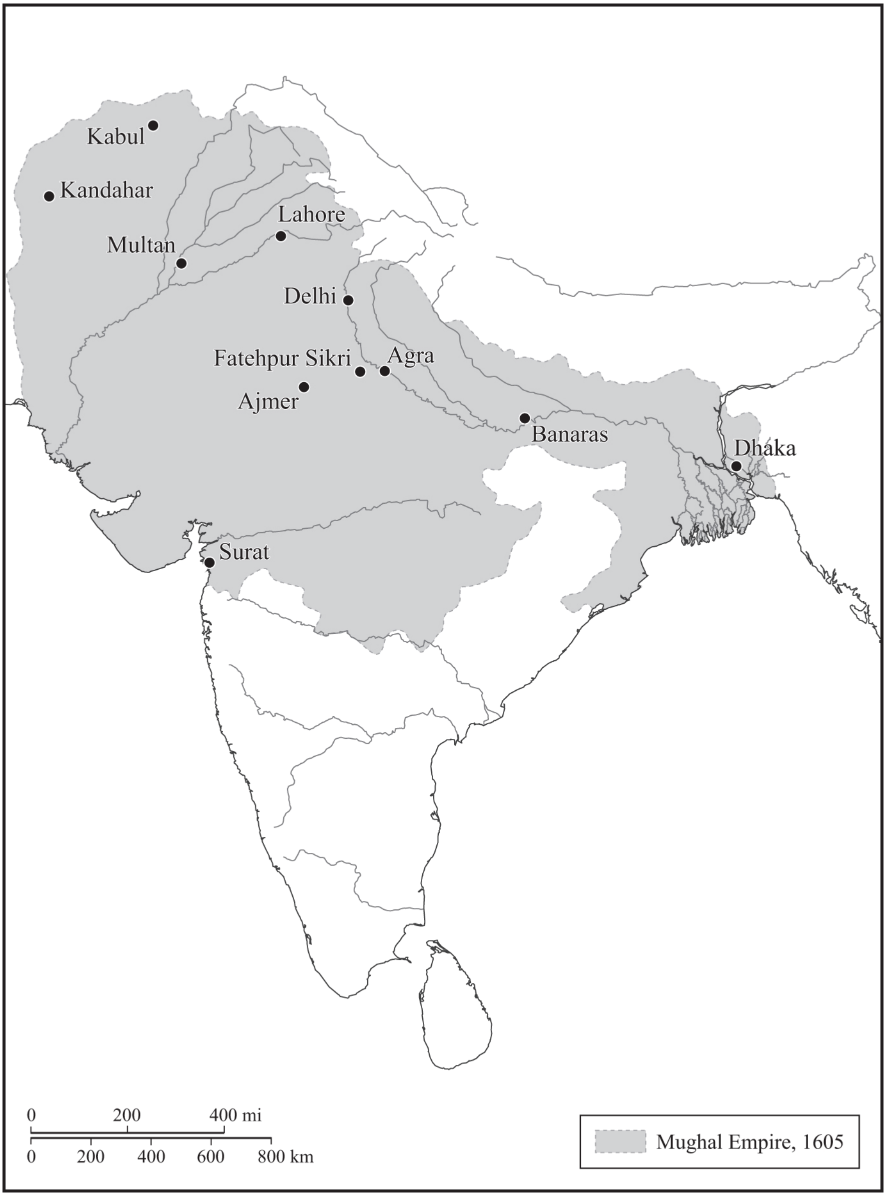
[38] Richards, 'Seventeenth-Century Crisis', engages with the first iteration of the 'general crisis' thesis and opens a special issue of the journal on the topic also spanning southeast Asia. This is not too dissimilar from Parker's subsequent treatment of these same regions in *Global Crisis*, 115–51, 399–420, 484–506.

[39] Dale, *Babur*, 100–208. Here, see also: Digby, 'Before Timur Came', 314.


Kabul
Kandahar
Lahore
Multan
Delhi
Fatehpur Sikri
Agra
Ajmer
Banaras
Dhaka
Surat
0 200 400 mi
0 200 400 600 800 km
Mughal Empire, 1605

Map 1E The Mughal Empire at Akbar's death, 1605

Although the Mughals exploited their Timurid inheritance in time (§8.1), Babur had hesitations about deriving his legitimacy from such credentials on account of his numerous Timurid relatives – who had helped with the conquest (*mulkgirlik*) or were subsequently invited to help him pacify Hindustan – standing ready to seize all or part of his new domain for themselves.[40] Stretching from present-day Afghanistan to the north Indian plain, the early Mughal state was of a very different form to that of the 'classical age' of the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century (§7.1). It was yet to be consolidated and rather fragile, being vulnerable to challengers from within as well as the vestiges of Lodi authority across the north, with taxation and administrative arrangements being rudimentary, so we can debate whether and to what extent it could be termed an empire at the time of Babur's death in 1530.[41] All these challenges came to the fore during the reign of Babur's son and successor, Humayun. His time on the throne was cleft by a period in exile at the Safavid court in Iran. Humayun's first reign was from 1530 to 1540; he was then defeated and driven abroad by Sher Shah Suri, who had risen to power via military service to the nascent Mughal dynasty.[42] Humayun returned to India to defeat Sher Shah's heir in 1555. Upon his own death in 1556, the throne passed to his adolescent son, Akbar, with government left in the hands of regents until 1560.

Before 1560, Akbar's reign was concerned with defeating the remaining claimants of the Sur dynasty, reconquering territory in the Lahore to Jaunpur imperial heartland, and expansion into central India. Upon reaching his majority, Akbar began a period of sustained expansion, first into Malwa in 1561, which lay north of the Vindhyas, and then into the present-day regions of Odisha in 1564 and Rajasthan toward the end of the decade. In the early 1570s, the conquests of Gujarat and Bengal extended the empire's frontier to the shores of the western and eastern Indian Ocean regions, bringing key ports and their wealth into the Mughals' ambit (Map 1E). Meanwhile, a period of administrative reform was underway, supporting the consolidation and better integration of newly conquered lands. Although there were important developments in the Mughal state under his son and successor, Jahangir (r. 1605–28), the next moment of significant territorial expansion came in 1636 during the reign of Akbar's grandson, Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58), with the absorption of the erstwhile Ahmadnagar Sultanate into the Mughal domains.

As Bijapur had swallowed up Bidar, and Golkonda had annexed parts of the waning Vijayanagara state, there remained only two powerful obstacles to Mughal domination over the Deccan. A treaty recognising Mughal supremacy was signed by the Adil Shahs of Bijapur and Qutb Shahs of Golkonda, but the Deccan was not pacified. This is because much of the countryside was

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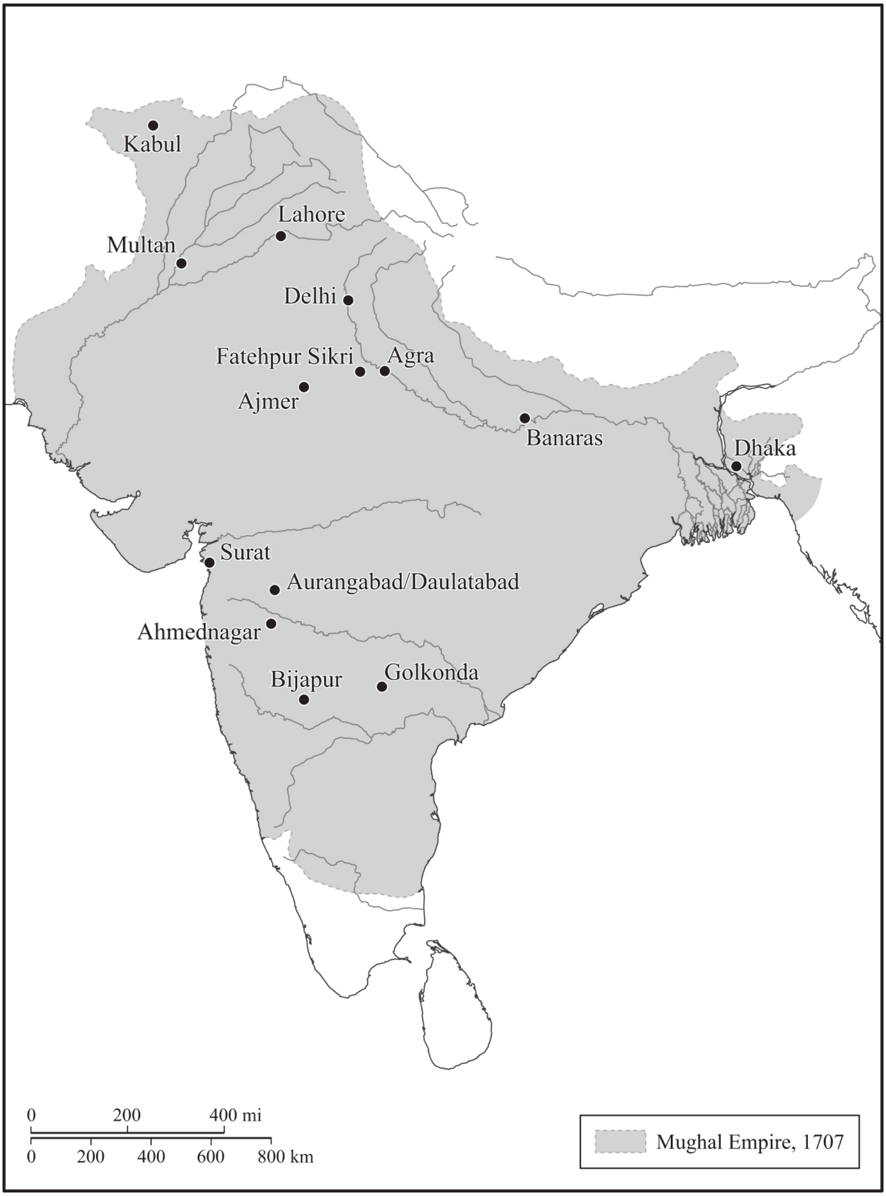
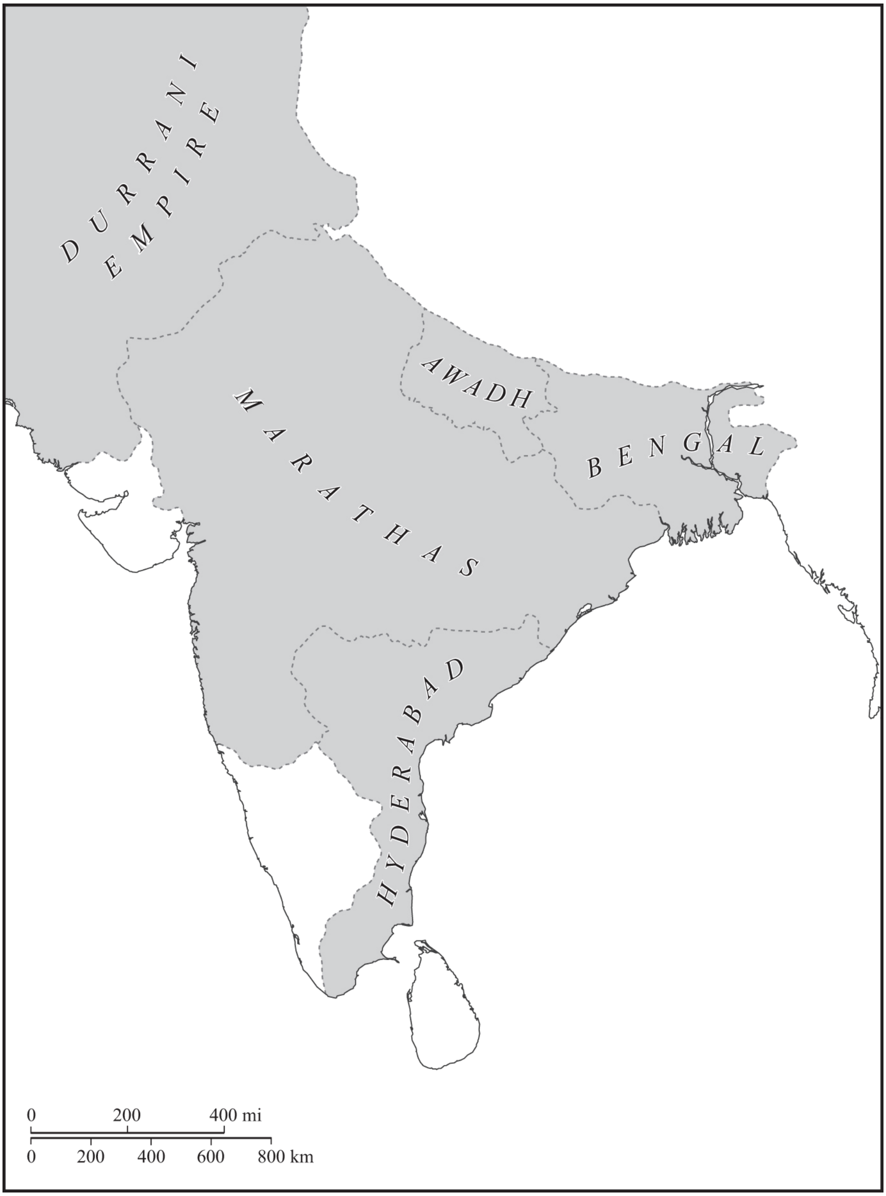
[40] For a history of the Mughals steeped in the Timurid ideological, institutional, and technological inheritance, see: Wink, *Indo-Islamic*, 136–59.

[41] See, usefully: Dale, *Babur*, 177–92.

[42] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 142–46.


Kabul
Lahore
Multan
Delhi
Fatehpur Sikri
Agra
Ajmer
Banaras
Dhaka
Surat
Aurangabad/Daulatabad
Ahmednagar
Bijapur
Golkonda
0
200
400 mi
0
200
400
600
800 km
Mughal Empire, 1707

Map 1F The Mughal Empire at Aurangzeb's death, 1707


DURRANI EMPIRE
MARATHAS
AWADH
BENGAL
HYDERABAD
0 200 400 mi
0 200 400 600 800 km

Map 1G The Maratha and other Mughal 'Successor States', c. 1760 outside either sultanate or Mughal control, creating a space for the rise of a new power – the Marathas – who would prove to be a major obstacle to the Mughals. The Deccan campaigns were headed by Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707) – first as a prince, then as Mughal *padshah* or emperor. He moved the imperial capital to the southern city of Aurangabad in 1681 and defeated the Bijapur and Golkonda armies later in that decade. The empire now obtained its greatest extent (Map 1F). Yet, it bears remembering that some conflicts produced very limited gains for the Mughals or even led to their defeat, and that a number of more or less independent kingdoms held out behind the lines of mountains and forests, more or less alluding Mughal power, including Kuch Bihar, Kamrup, Assam, Arakan, large parts of Ajmer province, as well as Odisha and central India (§6.2, §6.4.2).[43]

1.2.3 The Marathas and Late Mughal India

Other than being the Mughals' fiercest rivals, it bears asking: who were the Marathas? At the start of the seventeenth century, the Maratha leadership probably belonged to what was no more than one of many peasant-warrior groupings. In return for service to the Ahmadnagar sultan, the Marathas had acquired landed rights by the time of Maloji, who became an aide to the *de facto* ruler and was rewarded with an estate that subsequently passed to his son, Shahji. Shahji, however, served several masters: the Ahmadnagar sultan, the Mughal emperor for a time, and eventually the Bijapur sultan.[44] The eclipse of Bijapur power and the advance of the Mughal armies around the mid-seventeenth century established the context for Shahji's son, Shivaji, to make an independent bid for power. One source of Maratha-Mughal hostilities was the Mughal court's failure to incorporate Shivaji as a noble in the later 1660s. This was not because his claims were grandiose and of dubious legitimacy, but because Mughal elites saw him as merely a petty zamindar (landlord or landed gentry). Having steadily expanded into the space between the erstwhile Ahmadnagar and Bijapur sultanates, and consolidated the administration and military, Shivaji determined in the early 1670s that he should be crowned and invested as a Hindu king (§2.1.2).[45]

Aurangzeb's prolonged campaigning in the Deccan from the 1680s pitted the Mughals against Shivaji's successors, whose success or failure altered partly with the changing allegiance of local elite groups, while the toll of fighting and raiding on the land and its people was immense. A turning-point came following Aurangzeb's death in 1707. On the one hand, were difficulties faced on the ground, in the Deccan itself, where the Mughals struggled to maintain their grasp while the Marathas asserted their claims over various lands south of the Tapti River. On the other hand, political intrigue within the Mughal court erupted following the death of Aurangzeb's successor, Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707–12). Mughal succession had hitherto been an open contest, usually fought between rival claimants when one or other of the imperial princes felt conditions were ripe to launch their bid for the throne (§7.3.1). Prince Salim had launched a rebellion against Akbar in 1599, later ascending as Jahangir (his regnal name, meaning 'world seizer' or 'conqueror'), shortly afterwards facing a rebellion from his own son, Prince Khusrau, who was captured and blinded in 1607 to thwart his ambitions once and for all. Prince Khurram fought a war of succession upon Jahangir's death in 1627, ascending as Shah Jahan ('king of the world'), but a dramatic contest for the throne began a few decades later, resulting in the emperor's forced abdication and imprisonment in Agra, before the victor – Alamgir I, more commonly known as Aurangzeb – ascended the throne.

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[43] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 228–29.

[44] Gordon, *Marathas*, 41–58.

[45] Ibid, 59–90.

The war of succession after Bahadur Shah's death was among the last, however, for his successor, Jahandar Shah (r. 1712–13), was overthrown in a matter of months. Pulling the strings were the infamous Sayyid brothers, who effectively finished the open-ended system of succession by installing Farrukhsiyar (r. 1713–19) and a sequence of other puppet rulers before Muhammad Shah I (r. 1719/20–48) took his place on the throne. These factional contests were the context to the Marathas' demands finally being ratified in 1719 by one of the Sayyid brothers' emperors in Delhi. That said, as much as such recognition cemented the Marathas' rising power *outwardly*, it was also possible because of a change *inside* the Maratha state or *swarajya* (a term the Marathas used widely to describe their independent sovereignty or rule). It was not the Maratha king himself, but his *peshwa* (akin to a prime minister), who led the armies and brokered the deals. In the decades that followed, the *peshwas* became the *de facto* rulers of the Maratha domains, even as they came to share power with key Maratha chiefs, namely those of the Gaekwad, Holkar, and Scindia dynasties.[46] The *peshwas'* achievements were many. They included alliance-building and securing the loyalty of military leaders as well as literate elites, the latter to staff an increasingly streamlined bureaucracy; improving the region's relatively poor banking and credit facilities, thereby supporting the expansion of trade and the economy as a whole, shoring up the treasury, in turn; and continued territorial expansion, making the Maratha Empire the pre-eminent Indian power by the end of the period examined in this book (Map 1G), even protecting the Mughal emperor against invading forces in the 1750s.[47]

The period from Akbar reaching his majority in 1560 to Aurangzeb's death in 1707 witnessed the steady expansion of the Mughal imperium to its greatest extent and an efflorescence in the arts and intellectual life, culture and the economy. Often termed a 'golden age' or what Stephen F. Dale has called a 'Timurid renaissance', and granted the lion's share of scholars' attention, the unwarranted implication is that the subsequent period was one of dullness if not decline (§7.4).[48] Borrowing from Ottoman history, we might be slightly better off if we identify and describe the 1560–1707 period as the Mughal 'classical age'. It was a time which saw many of those institutions associated with Mughal rule come into being, including those later adapted or reformulated (sometimes by the Mughals' successors) as the Mughal state was itself transformed. Of course, we can only make use of the term with the weighty caveat that Mughal institutions probably never acquired a 'classical' form, given their constant flux, not to mention their variation across the non-homogenous political topography of the Mughal imperium.[49] What also bears mentioning is that the period between the late classical age and the era of the 'colonial transition' was marked by the establishment and/or expansion of a number of states, many of a 'regional' character and often seen as successors to the Mughal imperium because they exhibited continuities with Mughal institutions and practices. Some were formed by erstwhile Mughal governors (e.g., Bengal, Awadh, Hyderabad; see: Map 1G), others by the Mughals' rivals (e.g., the Marathas), while others still were kingdoms that had been incorporated into the Mughal imperium (i.e., the Rajput states, like Mewar).

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[46] Ibid, 91–113.

[47] Ibid, 113–53, as well as 178–95, for a critical discussion of 'empire' and other concepts as descriptors of the Maratha polity.

1.3 Early Modern Empires and Globalisation

The Mughal Empire was not the only by-product of the fragmentation of Timur's imperial domains. On its western fringe, Ottoman expansion resumed: the conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453 and the conquest of Red Sea trading ports and the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina in 1517 were pivotal moments in the transition of a 'frontier principality' into a 'world empire'.[50] Safavid Iran was another successor state to Timur's short-lived empire.[51] Some, like the rulers of Muscovy – a sometime tributary state of the Mongol 'Golden Horde' – also benefited from the political ferment. After 1580, they broke out of Muscovy's core and rapidly expanded across the steppe to the shores of the Caspian, even reaching the Pacific by 1639 (see: Map 1H).[52]

A related process was the spread of Islam (Chapter 3), for the rulers of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires were all Muslims. The expansion and consolidation of their domains not only helped to create states of a greater

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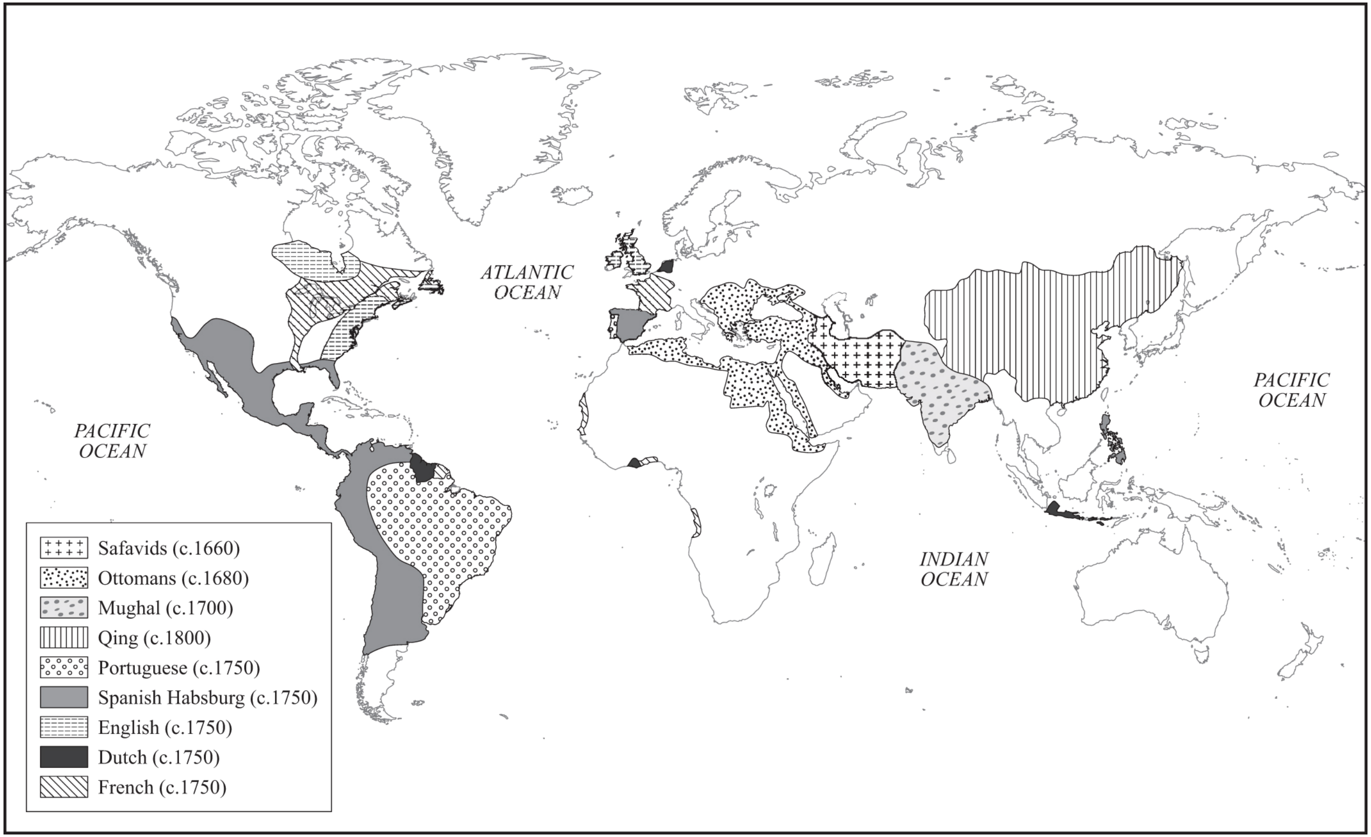
[48] Dale, 'Legacy'. As for the dominance of the Akbar and Aurangzeb period, we might note the recent volume by Koch and Anooshahr, eds., *Mughal Empire*, which very valuably spotlights the Jahangiri and Shah Jahani eras – so often nested or skimmed over – within the classical age at large. By examining the decades either side of Aurangzeb's death, however, Kaicker's *King* breaks out of the confines of the classical age or the separation of the seventeenth century empire from that of the eighteenth century.

[49] Here, I take my cue from the incisive critique of Ottoman historiography advanced in Hathaway, 'Periodisation'.

[50] See: Goffman, *Ottoman Empire*.

[51] Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, 82.

[52] Ibid, 65–72.


ATLANTIC OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
INDIAN OCEAN
Safavids (c.1660)
Ottomans (c.1680)
Mughal (c.1700)
Qing (c.1800)
Portuguese (c.1750)
Spanish Habsburg (c.1750)
English (c.1750)
Dutch (c.1750)
French (c.1750)

Map 1H Early Modern World Empires

degree of centralisation than had been seen before (see: Chapter 7, especially §7.5), but also helped to bring the languages, culture, and sciences of the Islamic world deeper into Eurasian societies (Chapters 9 and 10). At the same time, Islam was spreading into sub-Saharan Africa and across the seas to southeast Asia, so that the Persianate cosmopolis was imbricated in the Afro-Eurasian and Indian Ocean worlds. This dynamism in the 'Orient' not only puts the late medieval Occidental breakout into perspective; it also reminds us of the many frameworks through which we should view the history of early modern India.

1.3.1 Situating Early Modern India

India's so-called 'Persianate age', as so magisterially surveyed by Richard M. Eaton, began centuries before the period studied in this book.[53] 'Persianate' in this and other scholars' usage refers to the ascendance of Persian as a language, becoming a lingua franca and obtaining a hegemony in literary and other kinds of knowledge production by the early modern period across a terrain stretching from the Balkans to Bengal and even to the Malay world.[54] 'Persianate' refers to more than language, however, and signals the dominance of (evolving, never static) cultural forms: arts, architecture, literature and literary forms, material culture, yet also cuisine, dress, deportment, style, statecraft. These were transmitted in Persian texts and oral traditions, and via the peregrinations or migration of people from other parts of the Persophone world, especially (post-)Timurid Iran and central Asia.[55] The Vijayanagara Empire was also part of the Persianate world to a degree, such was the influence of Persianate culture.[56]

It was difficult to make a living in the parched lands of Iran and Iberia or the harsh and rugged Scottish Highlands. The inhabitants of these regions thus sought to migrate to prosperous lands of opportunities like India and the New World.[57] The migration of Iranians (or Iranis, in Indian sources) was consequently but one part of the larger transfer of population from poorer regions around the globe and was one factor in the steady increase in 'cross-cultural' migration from c. 1500 until the great migration boom after c. 1850. It was also one aspect of the larger kinetic culture of early modern times, other manifestations of which included the movement of courts, the circulation of itinerants and holy men, or the march of armies over ever greater expanses.[58]

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[53] Eaton, *Persianate Age*.

[54] On this last, see: Subrahmanyam, *Tagus to the Ganges*, 76.

[55] On the migration of Iranian specialists directly to the late medieval and early modern Deccan: Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 59–63, 99–102.

[56] Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 16.

[57] On the push-pull factors, itineraries, networks, and 'culture' underpinning early modern Persianate mobilities/circulation, see: Flatt, *Living Well*, 74–119.

[58] Lucasen and Lucasen, 'Mobility Transition Revisited', on cross-cultural migration in Europe, western Russia, and the Ottoman lands. Evidence of the wider kinetic culture can be found throughout this book.

That said, it bears emphasising that those Basques and Scots who entered foreign service (military, commercial) or else settled in as distant locales as north America, the Baltic, and east-central Europe nowhere engendered anything like the so-called 'Persianate world', rendering the latter all the more remarkable and important.[59]

Though not an actors' category, contemporaries were aware of Persianate influences. For their part, Indians seldom expressed disgust toward the *ghariban* and more often emulated and interacted with new constructs and concepts, as we shall see. The reverse was not always the case: even two-and-a-half centuries of Mughal rule was insufficient to minimise the shock and horror some Persophone immigrants felt upon setting foot on Indian soil, to say nothing of the fear and loathing reported by those venturing beyond the fringe of the *Dar-al Islam* or Muslim world.[60] India was hardly a 'periphery', however, for it vitally shaped the 'Persianate cosmopolis' and was one of its centres, probably the preeminent one outside Iran, especially in the early modern centuries studied in this book. Reflexively, the Persianate world/cosmopolis is an important framework within which to situate and thereby better understand early modern India, even as we need to be aware of the limits of the 'Persianate' and ought not ignore competing, complementary, or overlapping but not quite equivalent constructs (e.g., the Sanskrit or the Arabic cosmopolis; see: §9.1).[61]

Persian was used in what had become the predominately Muslim societies and states of western Asia, so that its spread was entangled with the spread not only of Islam, but of 'Islamicate' culture and learning even more broadly. A word is due about the terms 'Islamicate' and 'Indic'. The former is a neologism coined by the late Marshall G.S. Hodgson and widely used nowadays. It does not refer to the 'world of Islam' or the influence of Islam as a religion. Instead, scholars use it to refer to the swathes of Afro-Eurasia under Muslim rule and its influences, be they upon art, architecture, language, literature, culture, and the sciences.[62] By the same turn, the term 'Indic' refers to Indian learning and norms 'beyond Hindu doctrine or practice'.[63] Both terms point to 'a repertoire of language and behaviour, knowledge and power shaping lived experience beyond the world of religious doxa or practice, David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence propose, and neither Islamicate nor Indic 'denotes simply bounded groups self-defined as Muslim or Hindu.'[64]

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[59] See: Miller, *Urban Societies*, 52, 69–71; Belich, 'Black Death', 101–02.

[60] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 131, 159–242.

[61] The following are valuable essays examining more fully the ideas and concepts described above: Amanat, 'Remembering the Persianate'; Green, 'Introduction'; Eaton, 'Persian Cosmopolis', which usefully notes the overlap and tension between 'Persianate' and 'Islamicate'.

[62] Gilmartin and Lawrence, 'Introduction', 2.

[63] Ibid, 2.

[64] Ibid, 2.

Why have these terms obtained such currency among historians of premodern south Asia?[65] As we shall see in the next two chapters, what seem to us like primordial identities – such as 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' or even 'Indian' – were in actual fact little felt and of lesser importance in premodern south Asia.[66] It might be easy for us to slip Hindu for India/Indian and of Turk or Muslim for foreign/foreigner for the sake of convenience when talking about medieval or early modern south Asia, but this was seldom how contemporaries categorised self and other. Islam and Muslim culture became thoroughly indigenised within India, furthermore, both through their adjustment to the Indian environment and because of the engagement of non-Muslims with ideas, languages, traditions, and technologies brought by Muslims to the Indian subcontinent – an exchange and interplay that we shall explore throughout this book.[67] Consequently, we find many lineaments of premodern identity and loyalty, some mutually exclusive but others capable of overlapping, so that one's sense of self and other could well be complex and even fluid. Take, for instance, the conscious 'code-switching' between stitched clothes (Islamicate) and draped cloth (Indic) at the Vijayanagara and Maratha courts depending on the kind of business being conducted and the sort of image the ruler wanted to outwardly project.[68]

Long before the craze for porcelain and armorial ware in eighteenth-century Europe, Timurid elites collected and displayed Chinese porcelain, sometimes in dedicated *chini-khanas* ('house of china' or 'china rooms'), pointing to the imbrication of the Persianate and Indo-Islamicate worlds with the Eurasian and Indian Ocean arenas.[69] Like the former, these terrestrial and/or maritime spaces of circulation and interaction also antedated the early modern period, even as their evolution entered a new phase after c. 1400 or c. 1500. Mughal imperial aspirations often returned to the dynasty's homeland in the continental interior of Eurasia – disastrously so, in the case of the wars of the 1640s and 1650s. Despite the Delhi Sultans' and Mughals' failure to politically knit central and south Asia together in a lasting way, India remained closely connected to the states and societies of the Eurasian continental interior thanks to the routine movements of pastoralists and merchants, diplomats and holy men, and so forth, right through the early modern period.[70] During the fifteenth century, there seems to have been a revival in maritime trade as well as something of a reorientation, with India arguably moving to the centre of what historians call the 'Indian Ocean world'.[71] This concept is used in the sense of the 'greater

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[65] Hodgson's differentiation of Islam from Islamdom and the Islamicate is not without its critics, such as: Ahmed, *What is Islam*, especially 157–75.

[66] Compare this with, say, the situation in the Ottoman lands by the late fifteenth century: Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 60–64.

[67] See, further: Alam, *Languages*.

[68] See: Lally, 'Fashion'.

[69] Chida-Rizvi, '*Chini-khana*'.

[70] Lally, *Silk Roads*.

[71] See, for instance: Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 162–64.

Indian Ocean' or 'maritime Afro-Asia', made up of the seas and the ocean and their coastlines, but also their hinterlands and the deep interior.[72] Thus, when Vasco da Gama and his fellow Europeans arrived in Asian waters via the Cape of Good Hope for the first time at the end of the fifteenth century, they faced the challenge of operating within a very well-connected and competitive trading environment.

1.3.2 Occidental Breakout and Seaborne Empires

The Iberian powers sponsored the Occidental breakout that was well in motion by the post-Black Death era. Under the patronage of Henry the Navigator (1394–1460), Portuguese mariners ventured along the north and west African coasts, paving the way for Vasco da Gama's famous voyage of 1497–1499. The Portuguese monarchy made handsome profits from the spice trade because of its near monopoly over the Cape route in the sixteenth century – only a *near* monopoly, because merchants from other European nations began to try their hand at Euro-Asian trade by the late sixteenth century. On the heels of an Englishman landing in Asian waters via the Cape route in 1592 and a Dutchman following in 1595, a spate of rival companies came into being, each competing for the profits from Euro-Asian trade. These companies helped to share the very high risks associated with the dangerous oceanic voyage, yet too much competition undercut profits, thereby undercutting the viability of trade.

Thus, merchants realised that some form of monopoly granted by their respective governments was necessary to support their enterprise, and so the East India Company (EIC) was granted its charter by the English monarch in 1600 and the Dutch Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) established as a merger of rival interests in 1602. At first, the VOC and EIC struggled to break into the competitive world of intra-Asian trade, which was critical to the procurement of those spices found across Asia and desired by European consumers. They had to compete with the Portuguese, who held something of a first-mover advantage given their relationships with Asian rulers and merchants as well as knowledge of routes, marketplaces, and procurement networks. In time, the Dutch would attain pre-eminence in Euro-Asian trade, this position subsequently superseded by the English company, even as it veered from one cash crisis to another. That said, no single European organisation ever dominated intra-Asian trade, such was its enormity.[73]

Gabriel Paquette has recently made compatible two seemingly contradictory issues regarding the 'seaborne empires' of the early modern Spanish and Portuguese, the Dutch, French, and British (Map 1H). On the one hand, each of these powers were rather peripheral *within* Europe before they began 'metamorphosing into seaborne empires', yet also 'appear to be secondary and rather faltering actors' when viewed 'in the unfolding global drama of power' shaped by such massive empires as the 'Ottoman, Qing, Mughal, Romanov, Kongolese, Aztec, and Inca, among others'.[74] On the other hand, the period from approximately 1620 to 1820 saw the 'explosive expansion of European influence – through trade, conquest, and occupation – at the expense of non-European empires, whether judged by control over territory, trade, or preservation of political sovereignty'. It was often propelled by the rivalry and competition among the seaborne empires, especially in the wake of the Reformation, and sometimes even in the face of criticism, staunch resistance, and subversion at home and abroad.[75]

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[72] Vink, 'New Thalassology', 53.

[73] Chaudhury, 'International Trade'. For a subtle evaluation of this overarching trend from the VOC's perspective: Gaastra, 'Dutch Response'. On the Company's teetering financial position, see: Wilson, *India Conquered*, 1–81.

This was possible, he reconciles, because 'the commodities [including slaves], precious metals, and capital accumulated in the extra-European world helped to transform formerly marginal enclaves into epicentres of geopolitical power', seldom because of the vision or capabilities of Europeans alone, and more often in collaboration with non-European elites acting in pursuit of their own interests and via institutions they had created (particularly legal and administrative ones).[76] Thus, we cannot understand the newfound hegemony exercised by western European states by the end of the early modern period without understanding their imbrication within extra-European developments and, vice versa, it is revealing to look at the contributions of places like India to the evolving global system. Let us probe this final point some more.

Among the impacts of the expansion of Euro-Asian trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the pumping of liquidity into the Indian Ocean world – especially India and China – in exchange for Asian goods. The wider impacts were numerous, even if they were felt more acutely in certain places (e.g., ports, court centres) than others, and even if we should be careful not to overstate the size and resultant significance of pre-modern Euro-Asian trade.[77] To preview a few of those effects examined in this book, we find evidence of: widening money usage and greater commercialisation of economic activity, the circulation and development of knowledge over larger distances and with increased velocity, cross-cultural and artistic exchange, and diplomacy and rivalry between royal courts both in proximity or at a great remoteness from one another (Chapters 5, 8, 9, 10). The greater enrichment of the already prosperous Mughal state spurred the deeper involvement of political elites in commerce, at the same time making India a more appealing proposition for would-be rulers, whether originating from the subcontinent or abroad, as we shall see.

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[74] Paquette, *Seaborne Empires*, 8, for citation, and 31–37.

[75] Ibid, 8, for citation, 26–27, 47–96, on competition and expansion, and 180–206, on critique and resistance.

[76] Ibid, 8, for citation, and 38–41, 174–71. A forensic account of the excruciating process of network-building by Europeans with Mughal nobles in pursuit of a *farman* (writ) to trade can be found in: Siebertz, '*Farman* from Shah Jahan'.

[77] See, for instance: de Vries, 'Limits of Globalisation'.

1.3.3 Tribal Breakout and the Eurasian Revolution

The year 1717 represented a landmark moment in two respects. First, because the Mughal emperor, Farrukhsiyar (r. 1713–19), signed the *farman* or writ that stipulated the EIC's trading privileges. Most notably, the Company was exempted from the payment of all customs and transit duties in return for a nominal fee of 3,000 rupees, resulting in a massive expansion of EIC trade, soon surpassing that of the VOC. Second, because Murshid Quli Khan was effectively establishing his personal control over the province of Bengal, though remaining a tributary satrap or *nawab*. The succession of his son-in-law in 1727 marked the creation of a hereditary dynasty typical of the kind also coming into being in such Mughal satrapies as Awadh and Hyderabad part and parcel with the decentralisation of imperial government. The Company's interest in textiles had brought its merchants to Bengal, and since the privileges granted in 1717 deepened its commercial activities – and political interests – in that province, so the one development would be affected by the other.

The year 1739 also represented a turning-point. Over a decade earlier, 'tribal breakout' in the Safavid-Mughal borderlands triggered a chain reaction that led to the toppling of Safavid rule. Inexperienced, the new rulers of Iran were soon overthrown by Nadir Shah Afshar (d. 1747), who placed an heir of the Safavid house on the throne as his puppet before taking the throne in his own right in 1736. With the support of his general, Ahmad Shah Durrani, and the latter's Afghan kinsmen and followers, Nadir Shah marched from Iran to the north Indian plain in 1739, where they defeated the Mughal armies, entered Delhi (Shahjahanabad), and sequestered vast amounts of treasure and other valuables as booty. It was made possible by the acquiescence of certain Mughal elites, who cooperated in their own self-interest with the invading forces, even as Delhi's commoners rose up in defiance and rebellion.[78] Following his master's assassination in 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani united several Pashtun tribes before successfully creating a new kingdom spanning what is today eastern Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and north India. Thus, he launched several campaigns in close succession into Mughal territory from 1747, resulting in the expansion of the Durrani state and its enrichment through the seizure of Mughal wealth and revenue-yielding lands.[79]

The year 1757 was especially momentous. Moving from the northwest, Ahmad Shah Durrani's forces made their way to the Mughal capital at Delhi, where the emperor suffered the further humiliation of being publicly proclaimed a subordinate of the Afghan leader. News of yet another assault on the Mughal capital soon reached the ears of Company grandees at Fort William, Calcutta. The Company already stood accused by the Bengal *nawab* of abrogating the terms – and spirit – of its 1717 *farman*, especially on account of its militarism and commercial aggression. The Bengal *nawab* proposed a negotiated solution, was rebuffed, and thus seized the EIC's base in Calcutta. Humiliated and angered, the Company enjoined the Jagat Seth – a banker often described as the Rothschild of India – and others with their own interests at stake into a plot to remove the *nawab* and replace him with a Bengali general who had defected and aligned himself with the British.

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[78] Kaicker, *The King*, 20–21. See, also: §4.2.4.

[79] See: Lally, 'Beyond "Tribal Breakout"' which argues for this process being more of a 'break-in'. Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, offers the best study of Durrani imperialism. See, also: Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 112, for the relationship of Mughal decentralisation to the slave and horse trades.

The Company defeated the Bengal *nawab* at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, received a few territories around Fort William in return, and succeeded in placing a puppet ruler on the throne. In 1765, the Company fought the combined forces of the Mughal Empire and the Bengal and Awadh *nawabs* at Buxar. This should also be seen against the backdrop of the Company's participation in the War of the Austrian Succession (1744–47) and then the Seven Years' War (1756–63), for the English and French – while attempting to 'destroy each others' trade and political influence on the southern (Coromandel) coast' – became embroiled in the conflicts of Indian rulers, effectively turning them into proxy wars.[80] More significantly, the Company's victories in 1757 and 1765 formed the prelude to its massive expansion up the Gangetic valley and across north India, with parallel expansion being launched from bases in the south (Madras) and west (Bombay). The victory over the Marathas in 1818 made the EIC the most important political power on the Indian subcontinent.

What is revealed by recounting these events? In the first place, it shows how phenomena and processes, actors and networks that were local, regional, and even global in scope either shaped or served as a backdrop to key transitions in early modern India. For its part, the expansion of the East India Company's territorial power on the Indian subcontinent was part of a larger phenomenon, what John Darwin has termed the 'Eurasian Revolution' of the 1750s to the 1830s. This, he argues, was actually constituted of an interrelated, threefold revolution: one in geopolitics, involving the massive global expansion of Britain's empire, and latterly those of France and Russia; one in economics, resulting in the Great Divergence between the living standards of the industrialising northwest European states and other parts of the world; and a cultural one. This last revolved around a developing sense of the moral and intellectual superiority of Euro-American peoples, who saw it as their role to champion 'liberty' and nurture 'progress' elsewhere in the world, whether by conquest and colonisation or otherwise.[81] It must be emphasised, however, that India had a special part to play in these developments: the conquest of India was the fulcrum of the spread of British hegemony in the Indian Ocean world as it was turned into a 'British lake', while India's technical expertise – as much as its raw materials or the availability of a vast market – were integral to British industrialisation.[82] In such respects, India played a key part in shaping local, even trans-regional and often global developments, as much as it was impacted by them.

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[80] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 45, for the citation, and especially 45–68, for further details of what is described here.

[81] Darwin, *Tamerlane*, 160–217.

'We must generate better integrated, multidisciplinary historical research in early modern south Asia (not Mughal India),' Richards stated forcefully in 1997, 'in which scholars move seamlessly between the particulars of local and regional histories to broader south Asian and world description and analysis.'[83] A quarter-century hence, *India and the Early Modern World* strives to do precisely that. Arranged thematically, rather than taking the state as its framework or fixating on individuals, the following chapters explore the centuries after Timur left.[84] Our focus rests not merely on one or other kingdom or empire (e.g., the Mughal Empire), or even on one or other formation (e.g. the Persianate world), but instead spans as much of the subcontinent as possible, at the same time linking or comparing Indian developments to those around the globe, except where they are so distinctive as to merit attention in their own right. We turn, in the next two chapters, to what people believed and how this was changing in interaction with shifting social and moral ideas, as well as the power of increasingly centralised states whose rulers claimed universal authority. Chapters 4 and 5 then examine everyday life. We begin by looking at where and how people lived and the character of an urban-centred lifestyle that was coming in to being, driven by steady urbanisation. This last was closely linked to the deeper and wider commercialisation of the economy, which was one of the most obvious symptoms of early modernity and is thus among the subjects of the chapter on capitalism and markets, on how people's material lives and economic relationships were changing in the period.

There were markets for violence, too, and so Chapter 6 explores their origins and how Indian rulers 'transacted' with the pools of men ready to take arms for the defence and enlargement of their kingdoms, while being attentive to the environmental and cultural dimensions of early modern (organised) conflict and considering the relationship between warfare and state centralisation. The overarching concern of this and the following two chapters is with power, whether of warbands and pastoralists, of kings and courtiers, or of texts and images. How the state functioned and was experienced – especially via bureaucratic and legal institutions – is the subject of Chapter 7, which is careful to contrast ideals with realities and considers transitions from one early modern regime to another, for this reveals a subtler picture of politics and the nature of power relations between the monarchical centre and its provinces/provincial actors than has long been supposed. How kings and their trusted courtiers fabricated the royal or imperial image has been one of the most popular subjects of all those examined in this book. Chapter 8 examines kingly (self-)presentation through the interplay of various strategies and media (e.g., diplomatic communications, dynastic histories and genealogies, artworks, rituals, the built environment) with their various audiences and arenas. Connected with rival royal centres like never before, early modern kingly identities converged in significant respects yet also became distinctive, as evinced by the eschatological and universalist themes discernible in monarchical claims to authority or even the fascination with the globe as a motif.

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[82] Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*. On the role of Indian knowledge in British textile manufacture (albeit to printing and design rather than to the mechanisation of fabrication): Riello, 'Asian Knowledge'.

[83] Richards, 'Early Modern India', 209.

[84] The approach of this book is informed by O'Hanlon's critique in 'Cultural Pluralism' of what were then recent treatments of early modern India.

Cultural and intellectual life are the subjects of the final chapters. Cosmopolitan languages like Persian and Sanskrit and the high styles of the Mughal arts not only flourished in early modern times, but also supported a seemingly contrary development, namely the development of vernaculars, examined in Chapter 9. The vernacular did not quite become the 'national' in south Asia, as was the case elsewhere in the world toward the end of our period, and this had important implications for the relationship between knowledge production and state power on the eve of the colonial conquest. Thus, Chapter 10 examines who (and how) one received an education; the kinds of knowledge production and their registers extant in early modern India; how these were changing via interaction with other traditions (whether Indian, from the Islamic world, or elsewhere); and who was excluded from higher learning or else has been ignored by historians despite being highly knowledgeable (women, most especially).

India and the Early Modern World consistently and explicitly makes use of a period label that has become mainstream since its advent in the 1970s and yet remains much contested by some Indian historians even today. We ought usefully think *with* 'early modernity' and see what this does for Indian history, the concluding chapter argues by reflecting upon material presented throughout this book, and at the same time valuably bring into view what the Indian subcontinent offers to globally minded historians of the period after Timur left and before the colonial transition.

2 Belief

In 1469, a Punjabi woman gave birth to the boy who would grow up to be known as Baba Nanak or Guru Nanak.[1] His family were Khatris (a mercantile caste) and were employed in the revenue-bureaucratic machinery of the state as *patwaris* (village accountants). Consequently, Guru Nanak's education was geared toward an administrative or business career and he eventually worked in service to the Lodi sultans for a time. His inner quest and interest in mysticism was matched externally by travelling widely, often with his companion Mardana, who had been raised as a Muslim. The guru is said to have travelled to numerous holy places, periodic fairs and festivals, and famous temples, mosques, and shrines on the subcontinent, and – as some sources say – even as far afield as Baghdad and Mecca. His charisma, supposed performance of miracles, and the message of his teachings earnt him a following in what was becoming an increasingly crowded marketplace for salvation teeming with devotional leaders and their movements, which were popular across all sections of Indian society.[2] A community of these followers settled in Kartarpur in Punjab; they are known collectively as Nanakpanthis (followers of Nanak's path) and individually as Sikhs (lit. 'learners' or 'students'). A few years before Nanak's death in 1539, Babur had defeated the Lodi sultan and established Mughal rule in the north; thus, Nanak was witness to a pivotal transition in early modern India.[3] And, in the years and decades that followed, his successors would continue to spread his message and continue to develop new teachings amidst the political, economic, and social change accompanying the spread and then the retreat of Mughal power.

The first of these, Guru Angad (d. 1552), was appointed directly by Guru Nanak. The fifth, Guru Arjan Dev, was executed in 1606, possibly on the orders of Jahangir – who may have been anxious about men with large followings, particularly those who lent their support to rival princes or pretenders – for

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[1] The biographical-cum-hagiographical details have been culled from: Grewal, *Sikhs*, 6–8; Syan, 'Merchant Gurus', 309.

[2] McLeod, *Early Sikh*, on 'biographies' of Nanak, and especially 70–73, on Sufi influences on this corpus and their description of miracles.

[3] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 9–10, for Nanak's critical assessment of Babur's invasion.

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the new Mughal emperor's political authority remained fragile in these early years of his reign (he ascended the throne in 1605).[4] This led to the creation of two rival Sikh lineages: one headed by Guru Arjan's elder brother, Prithi Chand, who believed a peaceful path was more in accordance with 'original' Sikh teachings, the other by the guru's son, Guru Hargobind, who believed that militarising the community in the pursuit of righteousness was neither at odds with these teachings nor needless, but vital. The execution of the ninth guru, Tegh Bahadur (d. 1675), gave further impetus to militarism. Guru Gobind (1666–1708), the tenth and last guru in the Arjan-Hargobind lineage, created a militant Sikh order called the Khalsa; its initiates would fight against the Mughals and other opponents.[5] Over the eighteenth century, a number of Sikh kingdoms were established by the leaders of Sikh military units, while the spread of the Khalsa meant the second of the two lineages became something like the orthodoxy among the larger community, a process which continued in the colonial period. Today, the followers of the teachings originating in Guru Nanak's verses and his leadership are known as adherents of a world religion called Sikhism.

This brief sketch encapsulates several themes running through this chapter and the next. In the first place, it calls attention to the early moderns' hunger for miracles and salvation and their thirst for righteousness, for this was the context to the growth of devotional movements. Their origins may have lain in new interpretations of scripture or wholly new theologies yet, secondly, many of the era's new congregations – Sikhism a prime example – also became social or political movements in time.[6] Third, is the relationship of communities of belief to politics and to Indo-Muslim power generally, which is the subject of the next chapter. Sikhism's early history also reminds us, fourthly, why it is often better to talk of 'belief(s)' rather than 'religion'. Some early moderns might be tormented by their conscience to abandon one faith for another, suggesting the concreteness and boundedness of religions, but conversion more often had other motivations (e.g., material gain, social mobility, political expediency), and popular belief was more often a 'fluid construction' in which ideas and practices from different communities could readily overlap.[7] This is because what we might too easily describe as a singular and monolithic religion (e.g., Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam) were in the past made up of many different and sometimes rival theologies, ideas about the moral life, devotional practices, rituals, and so forth, such as the two ideologically divergent lineages formed among the community of Sikhs as early as 1606, each with their respective followers. This is to say nothing, furthermore, of individual believers' accommodation of the teachings of myriad local or mendicant holy men and proselytisers with their own worldviews and traditions.[8]

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[4] Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 270. Grewal, *Sikhs*, 63–64, examines the sources to reveal the mystery, rather than any clarity, concerning *who* exactly ordered Arjan's execution and the reasons *why*.

[5] Syan, *Sikh Militancy*, especially 2–17. See, also: §6.3.2.

[6] Calvinism, likewise, was not merely a religion but also a political movement, popular not only among ordinary *burghers*, but also the nobility opposed to state centralisation: Spaans, 'Low Countries', here 122.

[7] The coinage is Kruijtzer's in *Xenophobia*, 9. Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 9–75, for primary sources.

A little over a decade and a half after Guru Nanak's birth in Talwandi, Martin Luther (1483–1546) took in his first breaths thousands of miles away in the Holy Roman Empire. Luther would one day attack the Catholic establishment, much as leaders of some Indian devotional movements criticised orthodox ritualists and priests, Nanak being among them. Luther thereby became a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation, the unfolding of which lay at the heart of religious wars waged across Europe between Catholics and Protestants. We know far less (reliably) about Nanak than his contemporary, but it seems unlikely the guru was the kind of masculinist bully Luther was, for instance.[9] Such parallels and contrasts remind us of the value of taking a global approach, for Indian actors and developments were part of a bigger picture, even as they had distinctive aspects. As for Nanak's peripateticism, for instance, this was extraordinary in its range (whether real miles travelled or else imagined by his hagiographers), yet also in keeping with the early modern uptick in mobility. Other threads linking early modern India with parts of the globe both near and far include the spread of European imperialisms and, with them, the spread of Christian proselytisers; the currents of millenarian thinking that rippled across Eurasia from the Tagus to the Ganges; and the relationship of this last and other developments to climatic and demographic change. Over the course of these two chapters on belief, therefore, developments within India are linked, compared, or contrasted to those seen – or not seen – in other parts of the early modern world.

2.1 Hinduism

2.1.1 Brahmanisation and Bhakti

What is Hinduism? Often described as an ancient religion, such characterisation belies a diverse range of beliefs and practices, themselves steadily evolving and sometimes newer than we might first think. Indo-Aryan migrants brought their tales of the Vedic gods to India; these were eventually recorded, bequeathing us a body of texts known as the Vedas (lit. 'knowledge', composed c. 1500–500 BCE). A corpus of texts known as the Puranas (lit. 'ancient') was composed later, around 300 CE. Eventually transmitted in the Sanskrit language (§9.1), all this wisdom was preserved (or guarded, depending on perspective) by a ritualist or priestly group known as Brahmans. By the early fifteenth century, a self-conscious 'Hindu' identity had come into being – if not quite in name – among this small minority of Indians steeped in Sanskrit texts and

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[8] On each of these points, Oberoi, *Religious Boundaries*, is instructive.

[9] Roper, *Martin Luther's World*, explores this theme.

Vedic knowledge, and was sharpened through the confrontation between this group and 'outsiders' in the last pre-colonial centuries.[10]

But the Indo-Aryans and their gods did not enter an empty space. India was home to a range of religious communities in ancient times; often very localised, each had their distinctive deities, beliefs, and practices. It was with these communities that Brahmanical religion competed, when not co-opting their manifold local deities by giving them a place in the Vedic cosmos, as we shall see. Thus, 'Hinduism' is best understood as an umbrella or as shorthand for myriad beliefs that have steadily developed and been brought into relation over time. Ultimately, it was neither a stable and monolithic 'religion' in the premodern period, nor was it a category of wholly British colonial invention, as has sometimes been claimed.

To understand 'Hinduism' in the early modern period and down to the present, however, we must first grasp a process termed 'Brahmanisation'.[11] This developed out of the Vedic tradition, but also through the cannibalisation of local cults and non-Vedic traditions long extant in the Indian subcontinent. By the seventh or eighth centuries, Brahmans were no longer merely domestic priests who performed life-cycle rituals for royal patrons; they were now integral to the ritual life of Hindu courts and officiated such ceremonies as coronations.[12] Brahmanical religion was reformed in another respect as important new cults developed around the gods Shiva and Vishnu, spurring the Hindu sects labelled as Shaivite (Shiva-worshipping) and Vaishnavite (Vishnu-worshipping).[13] A temple dedicated to Shiva was tended by a Shaiva Brahman, who also perpetuated Shaiva literature, notably the Agamas and Puranas. *Sannyasis*, known for penance and austerity, were Shaiva monks who wandered in ochre-coloured robes, loosely draped tiger skins, or were sometimes entirely naked. Some wondered from place to place or between monastic establishments (*maths*), where they might reside for longer spells. They were by no means marginal: in the busy scene shown in Fig. 2A, Shaiva ascetics from different parts of the subcontinent are congregating, conversing, preparing and sharing *bhang* (an intoxicating drink made using the cannabis plant), and receiving a royal party. Among the assembled are a group of women; we shall return to the connection of elite women to *maths* elsewhere in this book (see, e.g., §5.4.1). As for Vaishnavism, its most significant scriptures include the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Bhagavad Purana*, and the *Vishnu Purana*. Vaishnava devotees were largely urban-centred and from mercantile communities, advocated vegetarianism and veneration of the cow, and visited temples

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[10] Lorenzen, 'Who Invented Hinduism?'. See, also: §3.2.1. *C.f.* Nair, 'Sanskrit Doxography'.

[11] Sometimes called and/or conflated with 'Sanskritsation', it involved not merely the spread of Sanskrit culture but also Brahman norms.

[12] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 15. For the non-sacerdotal roles of Brahmans, see: Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 46–48.

[13] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 13.

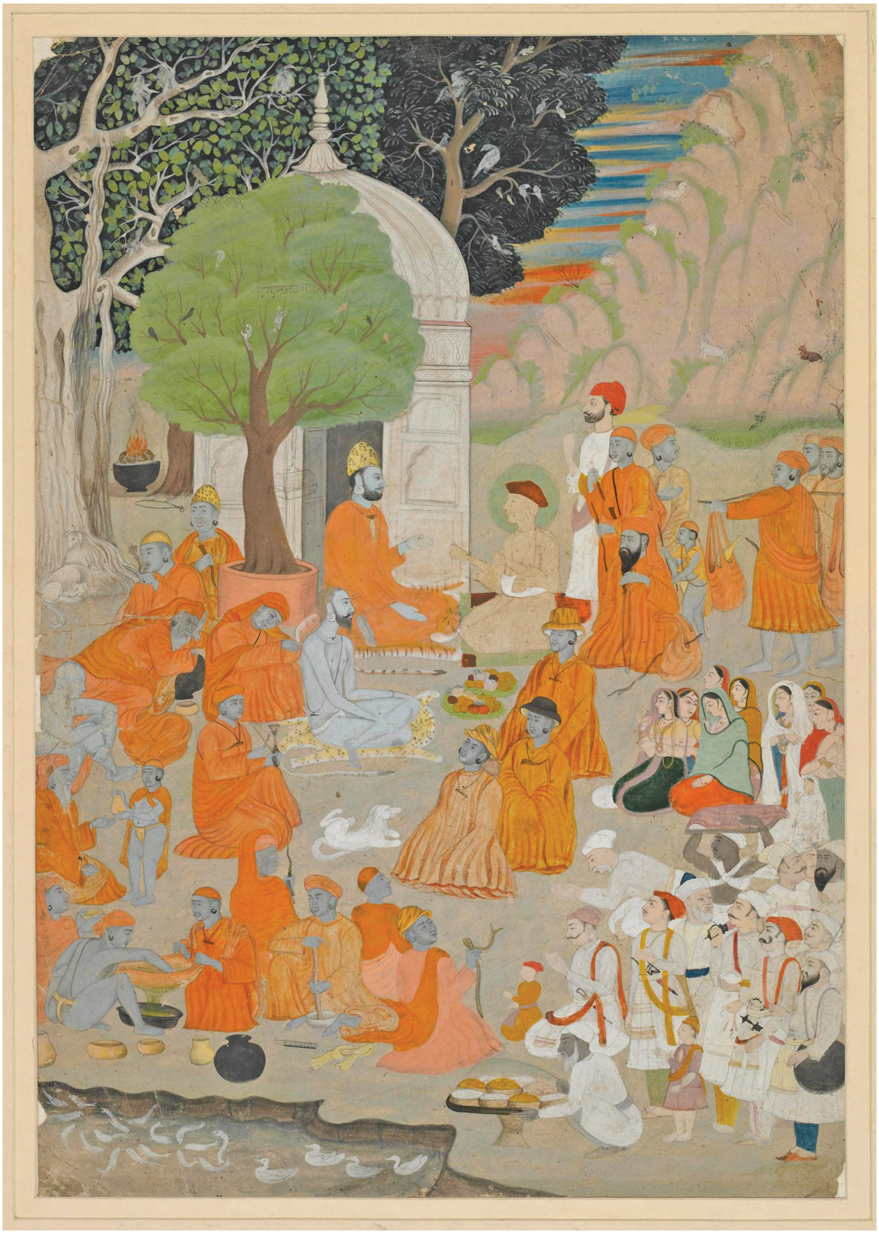

Fig. 2A A Prince and Attendants Visiting Shaiva Holy Men (watercolour; Rajput; eighteenth century), 1933,0610,0.2. © The Trustees of the British Museum

dedicated to Vishnu as Lakshmi-Narayan (his supreme form) or one of his other incarnations, which were tended by Vaishnava Brahmans.[14] Vaishnava ascetics were known as *bairagis*.

Brahmanical religion is critical to understanding the religion we call Hinduism, yet so, too, is Bhakti. Conventionally translated as 'devotion', this may mislead us into thinking that Bhakti is 'entirely private and quiet' when, as John Stratton Hawley observes, it 'is heart religion, sometimes cool and quiescent but sometimes hot – the religion of participation, community, enthusiasm, song, and often of personal challenge'.[15] Institutions do not matter to the *bhakta* (devotee) so much as fervid and direct divine encounter, their goal being to enjoy an eternal companionship with such a highly personal god.[16] In their quest, they have turned to poetry and song.[17] The *bhaktas* who are remembered were all poets, their verses are still sung today and many of them were alive in early modern times: Kabir, Surdas, Ravidas, and Mirabai, whose songs are sung in Hindi, Nammalvar and Antal (Tamil), Namdev and Tukaram (Marathi), and Nanak (Punjabi).

Although we should be cautious of presenting Bhakti as a unitary thing with a single, sweeping history, it is worth observing that devotional movements – known as Bhakti cults – began life in the Tamil country in the sixth century, with Nammalvar and Antal flourishing in the eighth century.[18] These movements were manifold and soon spread or else sprang up in other parts of India. They often centred on female deities (such deity-centred cults known as *saguna bhakti*), but some saw the divine as formless or without any attributes (known as *nirguna bhakti*). At the same time, we should not overlook the 'sociality' of Bhakti and the importance of community to devotees in favour of a 'Protestant-inspired' vision of Bhakti as devotion to a personal god.[19] All this, nevertheless, sharply contrasted with Vedic religion, whose deities were male and whose adepts aimed not for divine companionship but toward 'merging in the unconsciousness of Brahman', the Supreme Being or Absolute. As we shall see, furthermore, Vedic religion was rooted in caste as an ordering principle for society, which Bhakti had the power to disturb.[20]

Some medieval and early modern Brahman intellectuals were consequently as troubled by the challenge posed by Bhakti, people's neglect of their ritual obligations, and unrestrained mixing of the castes, as they were by the coming of Indo-Muslim rule (§3.2.1).[21] Brahmanical or Vedic religion was by stages either reconciled with Bhakti or else co-opted it in time, therefore, critical to which was the Shiva cult at first.[22] Indian goddesses were reconceptualised as Shakti (corresponding to pure energy) and thereby brought into cosmic union with Shiva (pure consciousness); male and female, Sanskritic and vernacular were thereby harmonised. The union of Shiva and Shakti is commonly represented as an icon found in temples – the Shiva *linga* (Fig. 2B): a cylindrical *linga* (an erect phallus symbolising Shiva) is sat within a *yoni* (a vulva, representing Shakti). The reconciliation of Shaiva Brahmanism with Bhakti also took the form of various local goddess cults steadily being appropriated and absorbed into a new Shaivate pantheon. So, for instance, Shiva was figured as the son of Dharma and the husband of Chandi/Durga and Kali/Ganga, as well as guru or father to various Nath saints.[23] Of course, not all these folk deities were as readily accommodated as Chandi was, for some were accepted with hesitance, others not at all.[24] Nevertheless, the process of reconciliation or co-option so described was part and parcel of Brahmanisation and the spread of Shaiva Bhakti, especially from the eleventh to twelfth centuries.

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[14] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 21–24.

[15] Hawley, *Storm*, 2.

[16] Ibid, 2.

[17] Ibid, 2.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Burchett, *Genealogy of Devotion*, 5–8.

[20] Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 6–7.

[21] O'Hanlon *et al*, 'Discourses'.

Shaivism remained predominant until about 1500, when a new Vaishnavism became more popular, spreading through intensive proselytisation and the fervid contestation of rival Shaivite Bhakti and Tantric belief; Brahmanisation then necessarily involved the appropriation of Vaishnavite devotionalism.[25] One notable expression of this Vaishnava Bhakti was Tulsidas' *Ramcharitmanas* (c. 1575), composed in the vernacular Avadhi language (or eastern Hindi), yet drawing on the Sanskrit *Ramayana* and its retellings in other vernaculars (particularly Tamil). It centres on Vishnu's incarnation as Rama and is far more reverential toward him than the Sanskrit urtext.[26] Rama – as well as Vishnu's other incarnations, such as Narasimha (Fig. 2C) – were popular in the Vijayanagara Empire and also in the eastern Hindi-speaking area of north India, whereas devotion to Krishna was even more widespread across north India.[27] According to the *Bhagavata Purana*, Vishnu was incarnated on earth as Krishna, living an idyllic early life as a child and an amorous adolescence in Mathura – all in disguise as a cowherder – before the time was nigh to defeat the evil king. After succeeding in this task, Krishna led his cowherding people to Dwaraka in Gujarat, where he spent his adult life. In his final years, Krishna became embroiled in those events leading to the great battle on which the Sanskrit epic, the *Mahabharata*, centres.[28]

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[22] Brahmans also played a key role in historicising the spread of Bhakti from south to north, including Vaishnava Bhakti cults; see: Hawley, *Storm*, 59–98, 148–89.

[23] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 104. See, also: Chatterjee, 'Goddess Encounters', 1438–45, for the evolution of the Chandi/Durga tradition and her place in pre-Mughal Bengali culture.

[24] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 103–04.

[25] Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 42; Burchett and Rao, 'Ascetics', for a nuanced reading of the dynamics between Vaishnavism and Shaivism, Bhakti and Tantra.

[26] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 128.

[27] Awadh has been ignored by scholars of Krishna *bhakti* in favour of Braj and Puri, Bengal, Gujarat, and Rajasthan, a neglect addressed by Orsini in 'Inflected *Kathas*'.

[28] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 131–32.

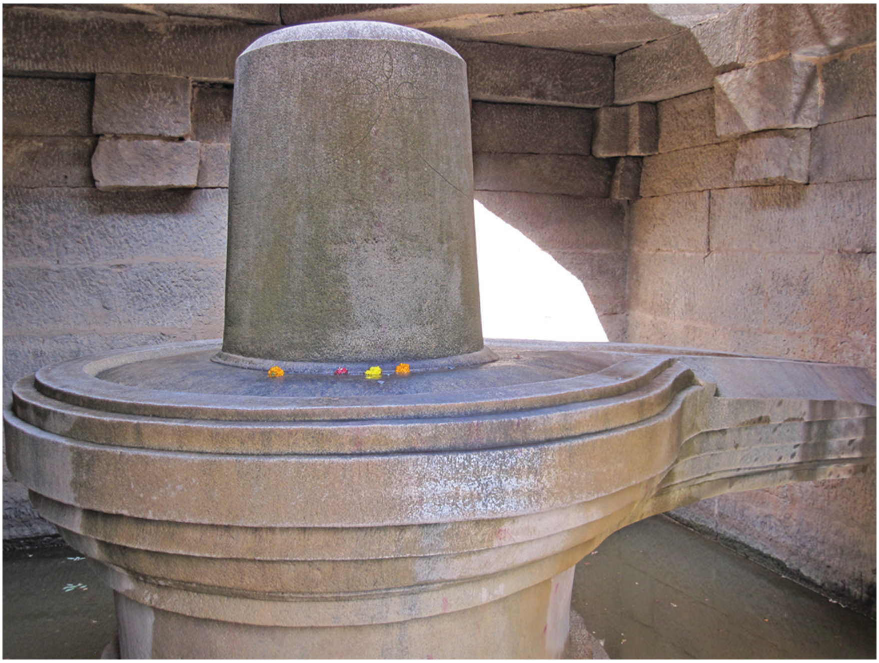

Fig. 2B A Monumental Shiva Linga in Vijayanagara's Royal Centre

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

Mira Bai is among the most famous Krishna devotees of the period. She lived in the sixteenth century and by 1600 had been included in Nabhadas' *Bhaktamal*, a compendium of the lives of Bhakti poets. Such hagiographic works and the songs attributed to Mira Bai are the major sources from which her biography is constructed. She was betrothed to the son of the Mewar king but refused to act as a devoted wife and honour her family, preferring to devote herself to Krishna by singing at temples or conversing with wandering saints. Surviving a poisoning by the king, who was mortified by her actions, she is said to have escaped married life, first travelling to Vrindavan and then to Dwaraka, both places strongly associated with Krishna lore. According to this legend, she became absorbed into a Krishna image when Brahmans sent by the king tried to force her return; she was never seen again.[29]

Vaishnava Bhakti poetry 'that used the language of erotic desire in describing the devotee's longing for god' was not a novel development of the early modern period, having roots in medieval south India.[30] Besides Mira Bai, two other

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[29] Ibid, 129–31.

[30] Ibid, 130.

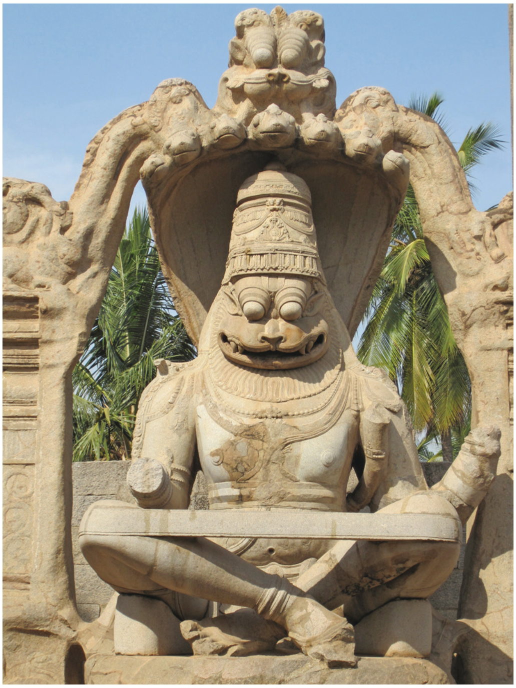

Fig. 2C Vishnu as Narasimha from Vijayanagara's Royal Centre

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

roughly contemporaneous Krishna devotees deserve mention: Chaitanya (c. 1586–1533) and Vallabha (c. 1479–1531). Their competing movements or sects (*sampradayas*) are today known as the Gaudiya Vaishnava and Pushti Marg, respectively.[31] Born in Bengal, Chaitanya was a Brahman whose Krishna devotion centred on *kirtan* (group singing accompanied by percussion) and the repetition of Krishna's name to produce ecstatic and trancelike states. Chaitanya focused on Krishna and his adolescent liaisons with the local cowherds (*gopis*), Radha being his favourite among them; their love play was 'understood as an allegory for the ecstasy of the mutual love between the soul and god.'[32] Vallabha was a Telugu Brahman residing in north India. By contrast to the focus on erotic love among Chaitanya and his followers, Vallabha eventually fixed on the maternal love between the child Krishna and his foster-mother Yashoda. He was able to convert Muslims to his brand of Vaishnava Bhakti, not by showing them that the God of the Quran was a personal one like Krishna, but by demonstrating that his approach was a better way to that God than Islam.[33]

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[31] Four *sampradayas* stand out in Bhakti tradition. See: Hawley, *Songs*, 99–147.

[32] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 131. See, also: Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 109–12.

Vaishnava Bhakti can thus be distinguished as being either of the orthodox sort, propagated by Brahman intellectuals, or the often more popular (if not necessarily radical) form associated with figures like Mira Bai. Such was the influence of Vaishnava Bhakti that royal patronage was poured upon Brahman intellectuals of the major *sampradayas*. From the perspective of 'Rajput kings in the growing Mughal imperium,' Dalpat S. Rajpurohit argues, 'patronising new Vaiṣhṇava Bhakti institutions was a way to assert their rising royal status in the new imperial paradigm and a means to cultivate relations with a growing Bhakti "public".'[34] Following the weakening of the Mughal centre came the rise of the regional kingdoms. Because the status of Bhakti and relations with Bhakti *sampradayas* were so politically valuable to these regional rulers, patronage of Vaishnava Bhakti in tandem with more orthodox forms of Vaishnavism grew considerably.[35] Taking inspiration from antecedents at the Maratha court and in Orccha, Monika Horstmann argues, the grandest of such projects was that of Amber/Jaipur's dynastic house, which had been Vaishnava since the early sixteenth century.[36] Among the models its rulers were expected to re-enact were those of the king Yudhisthira and Kalki, the tenth and final avatar of Vishnu, who would end the Kali Yuga (§3.3.5). To realise that 'apotheosis of the king', Horstmann notes, Indian rulers revived the Vedic rituals that culminated in the horse sacrifice performed in the *Mahabharata*, and also patronised Vaishnava Bhakti sects.[37] As these dynasties received religious legitimation through the work performed by Brahmans, so competing sects took the opportunity for dialogue with their rivals – afforded by royal patronage – to project their group identity and thereby gain greater legitimacy, too.[38] Amidst the general upsurge in Bhakti in early modern times, therefore, political changes in the latter part of the period proved critical to the ongoing development of religious ideas and the standing of different groups.

2.1.2 Caste

What today is known as caste describes a hierarchical and highly stratified system identified with Hinduism.[39] Its building blocks are social function or occupation as linked to a 'birth group' or *jati*, of which there are thousands, often minutely distinguished from one another. Its organising principle is the four-fold moral order known as *varna*, comprised of Brahmans (priests and spiritual preceptors), Kshatriyas (rulers, warriors, as well as seigneurial landed groups more broadly), Vaishyas (those involved in commerce), and Shudras (various servile labouring groups). Those so hurtfully called 'untouchables', as well as uplanders and forest-dwelling peoples officially designated as 'tribals' in modern India's constitution, 'occupy an ambivalent place below, outside, or parallel to this *varna* scheme.'[40] The moral and social order (*dharma*) is held to revolve around the respect for the rights, and performance of those duties, expected of members of each *varna*, each with their role to play.

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[33] For a useful and concise critical survey of the Pushti Marg, see: Dalmia, 'Hagiography'.

[34] Rajpurohit, 'Dadu Panth', 926.

[35] Horstmann, 'Theology and Statecraft', here 184. See, also: Hawley, *Storm*, especially 59–98, 148–89.

[36] On Orchha, see: Pauwels, 'Tale'.

[37] Horstmann, 'Theology and Statecraft', 184.

[38] Ibid.

[39] There is nothing comparable in other parts of the world; see: Bayly, *Caste*, 28.

Ancient texts – primarily the *Rg Ved*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Manusmriti* – express the sanctity of caste and the principles of caste society. 'All wellbeing and merit, indeed the preservation of the entire created universe,' as Susan Bayly summarises the tenor of these texts, 'depend upon this stratified ordering of castes.'[41] Such texts not only gave impetus to the righteous performance of one's duty according to the caste bestowed by the divine, thereby maintaining the cosmic order, but also to the reproduction of caste society through, for example, endogamous marriage. Yet, they have also given impetus to the pursuit of ritual purity and the avoidance of pollution (from lower-evaluated castes), which have made caste inflexible and an instrument of coercion and social exclusion.[42] Caste is not wholly peculiar to Brahmanical Hinduism, for one also finds 'in the past and today a high level of sensitivity to the nuances of caste, especially in matters of marriage and ritual pollution' among 'the millions who subscribe to India's minority faiths – Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Jainism, and the ostensibly anti-caste neo-Buddhism'.[43] Caste, one scholar goes so far as to argue, 'was fundamentally an order of settled society' across most of pre-modern south Asia and as far afield as Java.[44]

Whatever the antiquity of many *jatis* and the scripture relating to *varna*, the contemporary caste system, so described, is of fairly recent origin. Or, to put it differently, the hierarchical stacking of caste has become rigidified, the fluidity between castes has seized to a great extent, and the regional variations in caste and caste relations have been supplanted by something approaching a uniformity in the past two or three hundred years, while casteism has intensified.[45] This development unfolded in stages, as Susan Bayly usefully delineates. The first stage is of relevance to this book, for it was concurrent with the fragmentation of the Mughal imperial order after c. 1650 and the competition for power often commanded by men from fairly non-elite backgrounds. These parvenu kings turned 'to the symbols and language of caste as a prop of their statecraft, and especially to versions of these which emphasised power and beneficence.'[46] They looked to the prior success of medieval Rajput and Nayaka warrior-cum-seigneurial groups and consequently sought to affirm a similar martial and regal (i.e., Kshatriya) identity, which they achieved through their association with Brahman ritualists, who sanctified their political authority in courtly and public rites that gave the king's claim to political authority a seeming timelessness and legitimacy.[47] In the process, they sought to distance themselves from their own humble origins and distinguish themselves from Shudras, meanwhile empowering Brahmans and spurring Brahmanisation.[48]

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[40] Ibid, 9, for citation, and 8, 13–14.

[41] Ibid, 14.

[42] Ibid, 51–55.

[43] Ibid, 18.

[44] Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 51.

[45] That said, Brahman intellectuals *were* elaborating upon older models to outline how to maintain the proper ordering of caste, and their role to that end, from at least late medieval times. Their belief in the 'demise of Hindu courts as arenas within which caste and corporate identities could be mediated' ultimately 'contributed to the sharpening of caste hierarchies in contemporary social theory' that circulated and maintained their valence through to the colonial period, and which had the effect of empowering Brahmans and their assemblies as sites for the resolution of caste disputes. O'Hanlon *et al*, 'Discourses', 104, for citation, and *passim*.

The career of Shivaji Bhonsle (1630–80) was emblematic of such changes. Shivaji hailed from 'among the large, amorphous populations of non-Muslim Deccani tiller-plainsmen who had come to be known by the names Kanbi and Maratha.' These groups' beliefs centre on Bhakti cults and themes, giving little prominence to Brahmans, while *jati* affiliation and their wider social norms were fluid. 'Maratha' was being used at the beginning of our period to modestly distinguish people who had improved their lot via military service from the mass of rural people, or Kanbis. By the sixteenth century, its meaning had already changed, for it became an honorific for those rewarded with rights and land tenures by the Deccan sultans; Shivaji's family were called Marathas in this sense. As he carved out a domain of directly administered territories, Shivaji naturally sought to embrace a Maratha identity (over or alongside a Kanbi one) for what it signalled to those within and outside the area of his authority. Shivaji then found it important to go further, for he wished 'to identify himself as a sovereign in terms that were intelligible both to his nominal Mughal overlords and to the peoples of the Deccan and central Mughal provinces from whom he was claiming military service and revenue dues.' One desire was to be invested as a thread-wearing Kshatriya like the grander Rajput rulers, not least because this identity had valence amongst the Mughals. Shivaji naturally sought to appropriate a Kshatriya identity for himself and his dynasty, which he blended with other Mughal, Deccani, and Nayaka symbols of lordliness with currency in the area of his authority.[49]

How did Shivaji accomplish his transformation from a self-made conqueror into the embodiment of Kshatriya kingship? This was achieved against the odds, for a dispute had broken out in the 1660s among the Brahman community over the caste status and consequent entitlements to rituals of various local groups. The debate would be ongoing, linked to beliefs about having entered the *kali yuga*, but Shivaji seems to have settled it in his favour for the time being.[50] Enter: Gagabhatta – a Brahman pandit from the esteemed holy city of Banaras (Varanasi), whose community held links to the prestigious Rajput court at Mewar. They were seeking new patrons following the withdrawal of Mughal support to Banaras' pandit communities and were thus more agreeable to Shivaji's requests.[51] Willing to vouch that Shivaji acted as a *dharmic* king by preserving the sociopolitical or moral order and by sponsoring the performance of Brahman rituals, it followed that Shivaji deserved to be recognised as a Kshatriya.[52] A highly charged set of rites were performed in 1674, lasting nine days and nights, beginning with the *upanayana* rites to recognise Shivaji as a 'twice born' (i.e., higher caste), consisting of his investiture with the sacred thread, followed by his anointing with sacred products, particularly those associated with the holy cow, such as milk and *ghee* (clarified butter).[53] Once completed, he was consecrated as *chhatrapati* (lit. 'lord of the umbrella', for a *chhatra* was a ceremonial canopy that signified godhead and kingship in Brahmanical tradition), with the performance of a Vedic fire sacrifice to reinforce his royal status, and his presentation with blessed bows and arrows, elephants and horses.[54] Indian society subsequently revolved around 'lordly or Kshatriya-centred manifestations of caste values' forged through an alliance between would-be Kshatriyas and Brahmans.[55]

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[46] Bayly, *Caste*, 30.

[47] Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 39–44, which sets this development in a very broad south and southeast Asian context.

[48] Bayly, *Caste*, 28–39, 50–51.

[49] Ibid, 57, for each of the citations.

If this alliance had not been necessary in prior centuries, it is because kings had not sought Kshatriya status, and caste disputes seem to have been rare before the seventeenth century.[56] The disagreement concerning the conferment (or not) of Kshatriya status upon a humble-born tiller like Shivaji is significant, therefore, for what it reveals about the malleability of caste and how this was changing through the very manipulation of caste status. Indeed, there were even larger consequences of the coronation of 1674 and the Kshatriya-Brahman alliance. In the first place, the expanding Maratha state distributed landed rights tied to castelike designations in accordance with the scriptures, for a Kshatriya was meant to 'issue and confirm *jati* and *varna* titles and order his retainers and subjects in the idiom of caste', or else 'he is no true embodiment of kingliness.'[57] Secondly, the growing prestige of the Maratha *swarajya* also resulted in the emulation of Shivaji's investiture as a Kshatriya and his necessary embrace of Brahmanical specialists by those countless other men who were victorious in the competition for political control in the eighteenth century.[58] In these courts, thirdly, Brahmans' roles were not limited to that of ritual specialists; they also became bureaucrats and bankers. The most notable example of this was the Brahman lineage of Bhats of Danda Rajpuri who, by the 1740s, were the *de facto* rulers of the Maratha heartland, after turning the office of the *peshwa* into their hereditary preserve.[59] In numerous other polities – large and small, Hindu and also Sikh – Brahman scribal, mercantile, and ritual specialists were employed because they possessed the skills to transform lands acquired by conquest into functioning revenue-bureaucratic enterprises yielding streams of cash absolutely vital to any ruler's longer-term maintenance of power (§5.4.4, §7.2.3), not to mention their role in officiating those ceremonies and rites that conferred arriviste rulers with legitimacy.

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[50] Deshpande, 'Ksatriyas'. See, also, above: n.45.

[51] O'Hanlon, 'Speaking from Siva's Temple', here especially 267–68.

[52] Bayly, *Caste*, 59–60. See, also: O'Hanlon, 'Social Worth'.

[53] Bayly, *Caste*, 60.

[54] Ibid, 59, for citation, and 60. See, also: Gordon, *Marathas*, 88–89; Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia*, 143–44, for additional detail and nuance.

[55] Bayly, *Caste*, 30.

[56] Deshpande, 'Ksatriyas', 96–101.

[57] Bayly, *Caste*, 60.

Yet, the larger and long-term significance of this was tremendous, for Brahmans did not become mere record-keepers. Rather, as Susan Bayly highlights, *jati* and *varna* became more fixed into something like a system, so that a more formal, castelike social order began to concretise.[60] Toward the end of the early modern period, even forest-dwellers, uplanders and tribals, and those on the edges of sedentary society were being pulled 'into the world of *jati* and *varna*', for such was the extent of state expansion and the reliance on Brahman networks.[61] This process might usefully be seen as part of the much longer-term process of Brahmanisation, since the notions of caste that came to hold sway were those emanating from Vedic texts, the hallowed guardians of which were Brahman preceptors.

2.2 Islam

The Prophet Muhammad received those revelations contained in the Quran, Islam's central text, which Muslims believe to be the word of God. The singular importance of the Quran may lend Islam some stability and unity relative to Hinduism, given the latter's many texts and multiple, constitutive traditions, yet Islam has likewise never been a static religion, nor a monolith. Its history reveals how Muslims have absorbed and reformulated manifold local beliefs and practices, even as Islam was shaped by vernacular traditions in both its localised manifestations and at large, as we shall see.[62] Perhaps the single most important factor in making Islam more complex was the sectarian split that emerged after the death of the Prophet in the early seventh century. In essence, the cleavage emerged over a dispute concerning the Prophet's successor or *khalifa* (caliph). Arranged on one side are Muslims known as Sunnis, who predominate in the world of Islam, and who hold that Abu Bakr was appointed as the first caliph after the Prophet's death. According to those known as Shi'is, however, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, was the rightful caliph and *imam* (spiritual leader). Over time, the dispute widened in scope into a major theological rift; wars have been fought between proponents of the two sects. In early modern India, the Mughals and the larger proportion of the Muslim population were Sunnis, but some Mughal satraps – in Awadh and Hyderabad, most notably – were Shi'is from families who had migrated from Iran. Besides the early Adil Shahis of Bijapur, who were Shi'is, the Deccan Sultanates at large were home to scores of migrants from Iran.[63]

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[58] Ibid, 43.

[59] Ibid, 67

[60] Ibid, 76.

[61] Ibid, 40.

[62] Examples can be found throughout this chapter, but for a sketch of Islam's reciprocal relationship with India: Eaton, 'Introduction' [2], 2–9.

2.2.1 Sufism

Growing in popularity and power in the medieval and early modern periods, Sufism is a form of Sunnism (and less commonly of Shi'ism) aiming for 'a direct personal encounter to the divine'.[64] To achieve 'direct communion between God and man', Sufis might embrace esoteric practices and techniques, perhaps even borrowing from other religious leaders or groups (both of these points are described below).[65] Yet, as Nile Green reminds us, Sufis always held that – at its core – their knowledge and practices had been 'handed down from the Prophet Muhammad through the saintly successors who followed him.'[66] They always wished to be seen as Muslim; rooted their thought and action in interpretation of the Quran and the Prophetic tradition; and 'generally followed the life ways of Islamic custom, offering regular formal worship (*salah*), keeping the fast in the holy month of Ramadan, and abiding by whatever form of Sharia was observed in their community.'[67] They also chanted 'remembrance of God' (*zikr*), meditated on God and different aspects of the psyche, and cultivated 'moral virtues (*ihsan*) through the observance of formal rules of etiquette (*adab*)'.[68] These were all supererogatory practices; they did not take the place of the worship and moral codes expected of Muslims, but were additional to, and often exceeded, them. Thus, some *shaikhs* might also advocate fasting throughout the year, not only in the holy month of Ramadan, or encourage charity beyond the level of *zakat* prescribed in Islam.[69]

There remained considerable space for creativity, however. Sufi masters (*khwajas*, *shaikhs*) might combine Islam's 'high' tradition with Muslim 'folk' beliefs, much as they might reflect a more religiously syncretistic or more purist bent; myriad combinations were possible and Sufism was incredibly multi-faceted as a result.[70] A cult formed in eighteenth-century south India around Shah Alimullah Qadiriya (d. 1788–89), for instance, who was revered for his devotional poetry and the performance of miracles, some of which linked him to the *ghazi-pir* tradition: effortlessly fending off sword blows, possessing strength that allowed him to roll like a stone, and laying in a deep sleep while a cobra spread its hood above his head – an image drawn from the Vaishnavite tradition recognisable and thus impressive to local people.[71] Shaiva, Vaishnava, and Shakta motifs were, in fact, commonly embedded into south Indian Sufism. And, furthermore, some Sufis also 'inhabited' the Hindu cosmological landscape and partook in Hindu ritual activity. An example is the *santanakkuttam* rite, whereby sandalwood paste is conveyed in procession to the tomb of a deceased Sufi master much as Hindu caste groups carry pots of the substance to goddess shrines and Hindu temples.[72] Imbricated within these traditions, *shaikhs* were more readily understood and accepted by the local population, while such rituals also bolstered their charisma. Some Sufis decried religious innovation and syncretism, however, favouring a more 'austere and rigorous Islamic practice', although few Sufis were so consistently severe.[73]

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[63] Fischel, *Local States*, 104–91.

[64] Green, *Sufism*, 8.

[65] The quote is from J.S. Trimingham's classic work, as cited in: Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 135.

[66] Green, *Sufism*, 4.

[67] Ibid, 8.

[68] Ibid, 8.

[69] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 18. See: Lawrence, 'Earliest Chishtiya', 108–11, for those attributes expected of Sufi masters as variously defined by scholars seeking to conceptualise Sufism.

The issue of devotionalism and miracles brings us to a second characteristic, although here some caution is needed in how it is described. On the one hand, Sufism has frequently been described as a form of 'mystical' Islam led by Sufi 'mystics' as 'charismatic lone stars or prophetic founders of new religions'.[74] There are numerous reasons for such representations. Some Sufis were acclaimed as *hakims* or healers (§10.2) and exorcists. Sufi masters were venerated for their virtuous lives, heroic deeds, and performance of miracles, not least because believers found ready parallels between a saint's miracles (*karamat*) and the Prophet's miracles (*mu'jizat*).[75] Their charisma and miraculous power aroused devotees' reverence and ensured their continued veneration well beyond their own lifetimes. Once departed, they became saintly figures (*walis*) and the objects of *tai'fas* (saint cults), often centred on their shrine complexes (*dargahs*), with annual festive celebrations commemorating the date of their death or *urs* (lit. 'marriage with God').[76] And to this can be added the Sufis' role in interceding between devotees and god, the place of music and verse in Sufi worship (Fig. 2D), and the concomitant use in some

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[70] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 112.

[71] Ibid, 112, 190.

[72] Ibid, 115–49.

[73] Ibid, 113, for citation, and 114–15, for further examples from south India. See, also: Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 110–32.

[74] Green, *Sufism*, 5.

[75] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 18, for citation; Lawrence, 'Earliest Chishtiya', 106.

[76] Eaton, 'Shrine', gives a detailed portrait of the rituals and ceremonies through which the cult of Baba Farid was propagated, paying attention to the role of royal patronage at the tomb itself but also touching on the construction of memorials to the saint through the Punjab countryside by agriculturalists, all indicating his wide and enduring importance.

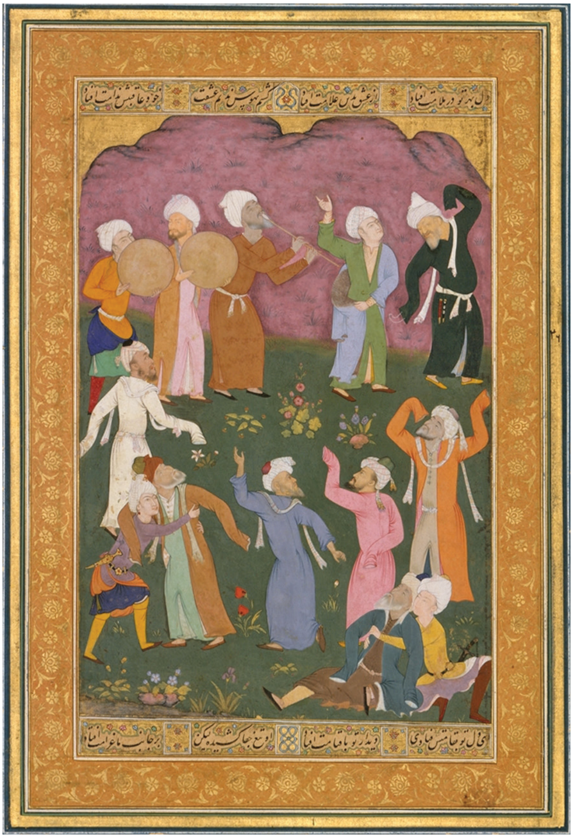

Fig. 2D Dancing Dervishes (watercolour and gold; Mughal artist; c. 1610)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 55.121.10.18

brotherhoods of alcohol and narcotics like opium and *bhang* or *hashish* (cannabis products) to achieve ecstatic communion with the divine. All these things were castigated by the most austere Sufis and Muslim clerics, and some more moderate ones, too.[77]

On the other hand, to label Sufism as mysticism is misleading, Nile Green argues. Sufism – or Sufi Islam, as Green thinks it should properly be termed – can instead be defined in terms of the centrality of tradition.[78] Sufis have long emphasised the importance of a master – who has already trodden the path and is thus already part of the tradition – in directing these practices and acting as a guide (*pir*) to his disciples (*murids*), whose absolute obedience is of paramount importance. Since the medieval period, masters and disciples have been organised into 'brotherhoods' or orders known as *tariqas* (lit. 'paths'), many of which created their own institutions, such as lodges (*khanaqahs*).[79] In emphasising tradition over mysticism, Green does not aim 'to deny that many Sufis underwent mystical experiences which they subsequently held in high value' but 'to make the point that these private experiences only acquired meaning and credibility through being absorbed into the collective and collaborative venture of different generations of Muslims who over the passage of time remained highly conscious of one another's exemplary actions and teachings.'[80] A spiritual lineage of this kind is known as a *silsila* (lit. 'chain').

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[77] See: Green, *Sufism*.

[78] Ibid, 5.

The final defining aspect is Sufi Islam's relationship with temporal power, although this is more an acquired role than an intrinsic feature. Some Sufis remained marginal actors and others were antinomian. Some preferred a more ascetic path and to live outside any *tariqa*, not least because *tariqa* Sufis accused them of departing dangerously from orthodoxy, resulting in clashes, much as the Anabaptists clashed with the Lutherans.[81] They are known as 'dervishes', *qalandars*, or *faqirs*; Fig. 2E depicts a dervish in a trance-like state, his simple fur or woollen garb and alms bowl symbols of his renunciation of material concerns, as is the colour blue.[82] They were often mendicant and highly mobile, sometimes selling amulets, offering songs of praise, performing divinations and feats of devotion (e.g., fire walking, eating glass); and helped bridge Muslim culture to Indic religions at large well beyond the urban centres in which Sufi lodges and hospices were to be found.[83] Yet, a widespread view held that *shaikhs* were closer to God than warring, temporal princes could ever be, so that the former held a stronger claim to being God's representatives, the latter merely guardians 'entrusted with a temporary lease on such power through the grace of some Muslim saint.'[84] Thus, by the Middle Ages, a Sufi 'religious establishment' had come into being and many Sufis possessed prestige and tremendous power.[85]

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[79] Ibid, 8–9.

[80] Ibid, 4.

[81] The comparison is posed by Eaton in *Sufis of Bijapur*, 280.

[82] On this last point, see: Lally, *Silk Roads*, 142.

[83] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 76; Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 243–81.

[84] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 83. For a deeper analysis, centring on the similarity of Muslim 'shrine-centred sovereignty' with Hindu 'temple-centred sovereignty' as a vital context to understanding shrine/temple destruction by Muslim armies in enemy territory, see: Moin, 'Sovereign Violence', especially 479–95.

[85] Green, *Sufism*, 6.

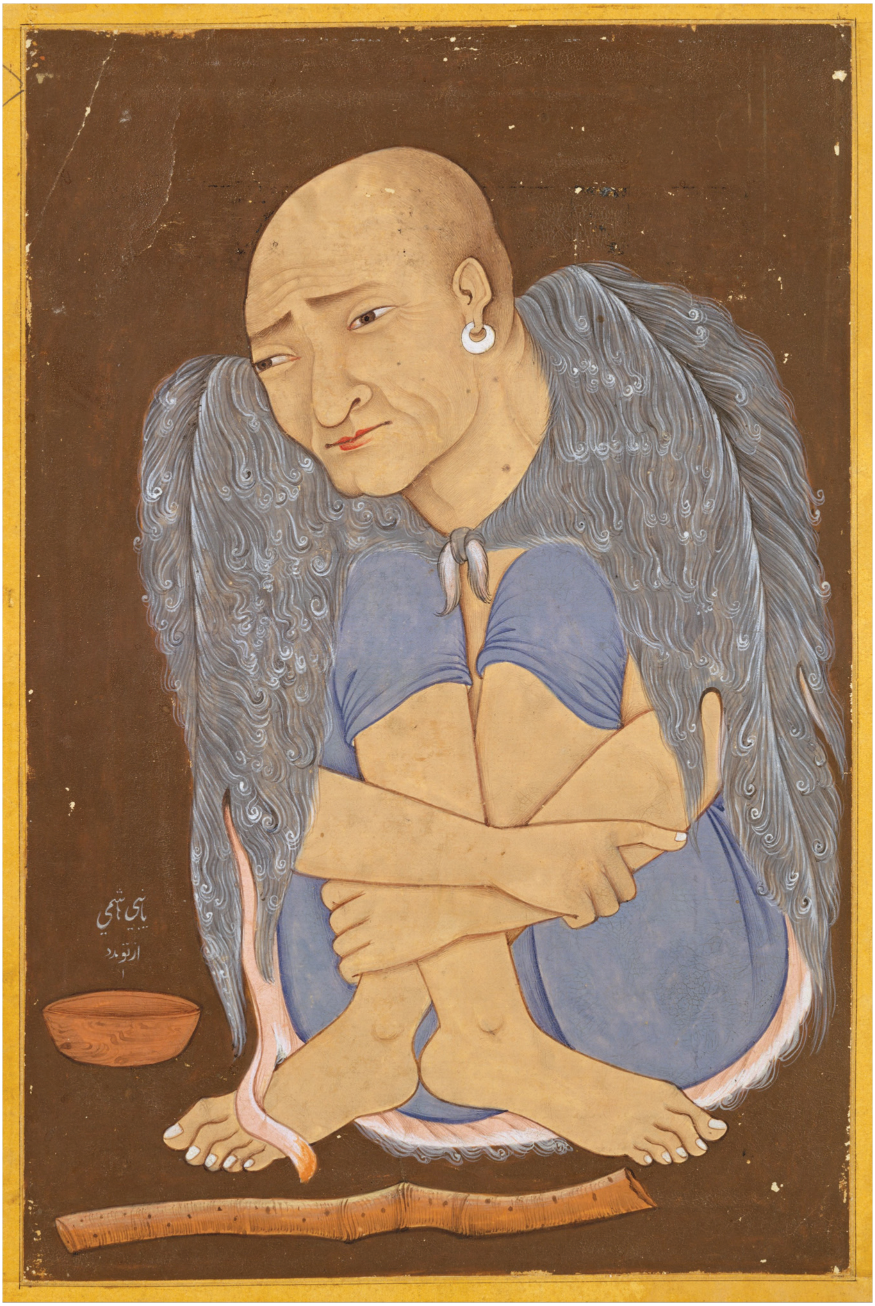
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Fig. 2E Portrait of a Dervish (watercolour and gold; possibly Bijapuri; early seventeenth century)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 57.51.30

2.2.2 Saints and Sultans

The Mongol invasions and the aftermath of Timur’s death in 1405 gave impetus to the migration of Sufis from central Asia. The Chishti, Naqshbandi, Qadiri, and Shattari orders were among those spreading into south Asia.[86] The Naqshbandi *tariqa* dates to the twelfth century but was structurally renovated under the leadership of the politically-active (and powerful) Khwaja ‘Ubaydullah Ahrar, whose descendants formed a distinct branch – the Ahrari. Khwaja Ahrar’s centralising reforms and cultivation of ties with local potentates brought the order considerable wealth and spirito-temporal power. Reflexively, association with the order and its leader brought not only legitimacy, but also resources and capital (financial, human, moral) to political notables and dynasts.[87] Take, for instance, Khwaja ‘Ubaydullah Ahrar’s bestowal of the name Zahir al-Din Muhammad upon the would-be Mughal emperor Babur. This initiated an important relationship between the Mughal dynasty and the Ahrari *tariqa*, with Babur seeking support from the Ahrari Sufis while fighting for his right to the throne in central Asia in the late fifteenth century, for example.[88] The order expanded and set down roots in Kabul before Babur’s conquest of that city in 1504, largely through the benefices of endowments of property made by Timurid noble patrons earlier resident in Kabul while the region was under Timurid rule.[89] Thus, after 1504, Babur capitalised upon and cemented relations with the Ahrari Sufis in the course of establishing his authority in Kabul, and the Mughals would continue to strike marriage alliances with the family members of the Ahrari *khwajas* into Akbar’s reign.[90]

After the conquest of India, however, the Mughals’ largesse would shift from the Ahraris to another order with long-standing links to Indo-Muslim rule – the Chishtiya (§8.2).[91] It was founded by Muinuddin Chishti (1142–1236) in present-day Afghanistan and introduced to Ajmer in Rajasthan in his lifetime. Nizam al-din Awliya (1238–1325) was a Chishti who went on to establish his own branch or lineage of the order and is the most famous of all Sufi saints on the Indian subcontinent today.[92] His shrine complex lies around two kilometres due west, significantly enough, of the tombs of the Lodi sultans. Relations were far from smooth between Nizam al-din Awliya and Alauddin Khalji (r. 1296–1316), one of the greatest of the Delhi sultans, yet the Chishti order nevertheless became enmeshed in the life of the state at large. The courtier and poet, Amir Khusrau (1253–1325), was at once among Nizam al-Din's *murids*, their tombs even built beside one another, and a publicist of Tughluq imperialism. Some Chishtis even trailed the Sultanate armies on campaigns.[93] If all this formed the basis of the Mughals' attraction to the order, this is neither to say that Chishti thought was long before preserved in aspic, nor that Chishti *shaikhs* traded on their *tariqa's* pedigree alone. Important developments were underway in the early modern period, partly in response to the reignition of intellectual differences and competition within the Naqshbandiya in the wake of the latter's cooling relations with the Mughal centre during the leadership of Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624).[94]

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[86] On their spread into the Deccan from about the mid-fourteenth century, and key doctrinal-philosophical differences between the Chishtiya, Qadariya, and Shattariya, see: Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 45–79. On the Naqshbandiya and the eventual ‘repatriation’ of offshoots of the order from India to Afghanistan and central Asia: Ziad, ‘Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi’.

[87] Gross, ‘Naqshbandiya’, 232–33.

[88] Foltz, ‘Cultural Contacts’, 163; Moin, *Millennial*, 70–73.

[89] Dale, ‘Legacy’, 181–82.

[90] Ibid, 183. See, also: Dale and Payind, ‘Ahrari *Waqf*’. Note, the rulers of the fifteenth-century regional sultanates also had ‘close personal relations with Sufi shaykhs and qalandars’: Orsini and Sheikh, ‘Introduction’, 39.

[91] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 205–17, for a useful primary source.

[92] Lawrence, ‘Earliest Chishtiya’, 116–25; Ernst and Lawrence, *Chishti Order*; Currie, *Shrine and Cult*.

As signalled by this discussion, a reciprocal relationship between saint and sultan – 'cash and land for miracles and blessings', as Green puts it – had come into being by the late medieval period:

> In almost every corner of the Islamic world, from the twelfth century on we begin to hear more and more stories in which the Sufi saints were seen to use their *baraka* [blessing] as a means of intervention in what in secular terms would be seen as political affairs. They cured kings and courtiers of life-threatening illnesses; they decided on the outcome of king-making battles; they promised heirs to rulers who had no sons; they caused one town to founder and another to flourish; they brought pestilence or plenty on taxable fiefdoms.[95]

As Indo-Muslim rule spread out across the Indian subcontinent, so, too, did Sufis and Sufism. Gisu Daraz, one of Nizam al-Din's successors, fled Delhi as Timur's armies advanced and eventually settled in the southern Deccan, where Tughluq authority had recently been evicted. Two new dynasties now held sway: the Sangamas and Bahmanis, each rising from fairly humble origins. The former were non-Muslims, yet both soon styled themselves as 'sultans' in the Indo-Muslim kingly fashion set by the Tughluqs in south India. In keeping with 'northern' tradition, the Bahmanis also patronised various Sufi *shaikhs*, who presented the sultans with turbans and robes at their coronation ceremonies – crowning them, essentially – which was highly auspicious and charged. Gisu Daraz was among those who forged an alliance with the Bahmani sultan, Firuz, and helped create a moral-theological infrastructure vital for the state. In so doing, Gisu Daraz secured his fame and that of his lineage far beyond the

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[93] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 44. On the connection of Chishti *shaikh*s and Indo-Muslim kings established from the early Sultanate times: Eaton, 'Temple Desecration', 251–54.

[94] Alam, 'Debate Within'.

[95] Green, *Sufism*, 96.

Bahmani dynasty itself (and this despite a falling out between the two men). This was thanks to the state's institutionalisation of the *shaikh*'s cult via the physical monument and economic base given over to it.[96]

Sufis were occasionally connected to the *spread* of Muslim power at the state's moving frontier, which was generally to be found beyond areas of settled cultivation. They did so not only by providing blessings, but manpower and military leadership. The Safavi order in Iran or those 'warrior Sufis' allied to the late medieval conquest of the Deccan are significant examples. Often, there is reason to be critical of the remembrance of Sufis as *ghazi-babas* or *ghazi-pirs* (a *ghazi* might literally be translated as 'holy warrior') or *shahids* (martyrs), however.[97] In the first place, some of the sources available to us are works of hagiography, many written long after events purportedly occurred, and hence cannot reliably be taken at face value. Second, the era of the 'warrior Sufis' in Indian history was also rather short, Richard M. Eaton argues.[98] Thus, many warrior Sufis and Sufi martyrs of the early modern period were fighting opponents *within* the domains of Muslim states rather than on the boundaries of Muslim power. Such was the case of Shah Alimullah Qadiriya, for example.[99] In any case, Sufis were rewarded with grants of land not subject to the state's revenue demands, the income or bounty from which they could support the *tariqa* and its institutions, and which additionally served to incorporate them into the state as clients of a sort.[100] In addition to these 'warrior' and 'landed' Sufis there were 'literate' Sufis who composed poetic or literary works, like Waris Shah in Punjab, but also treatises on religion and science, often reaching out to broader audiences, as exemplified by the otherwise reclusive Chishtis of the Bijapur Sultanate.[101] Of course, a *shaikh* need not be only one or the other in life or posthumous remembrance; his biography might combine intellectual and literary talents with supernatural and martial powers as well as temporal leadership and conquest.

Allegiance with royalty was not the only means by which Sufi orders spread and secured their future. As their *khanaqahs*, shrine complexes, and kitchens providing *langar* became public institutions, so visiting pilgrims – including rich merchants – brought benefactions, large and small. Another way of propagating and embedding the order was through marriage and procreation with local communities, something revealed in the ethnogenesis narratives of many central Eurasian tribes.[102] Ultimately, 'the sanctification of the Sufis had its greatest impact in laying the foundations for a devotional Islam in which the veneration of saints deemed more accessible than a distant God provided a vehicle for popular religious expression' – accessible, moreover, not only by men but also by women, not only by urban congregants in proximity of a mosque but also the vast and dispersed rural masses.[103]

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[96] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 33–58.

[97] See, also: §3.1.1.

[98] Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 19–44, looks at these issues in depth.

[99] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 187–215.

[100] Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 203–42.

[101] The latter have been profiled by Eaton in *Sufis of Bijapur*, 135–74.

[102] Green, *Sufism*, 100–01. See, also: Green, 'Blessed Men'.

On the one hand, therefore, Sufi influence spread through Indian society during the early modern period, reaching non-elites and also non-Muslims. Evidence of this, and signs of how it was achieved, can be found in texts and oral traditions. Everywhere across Afro-Eurasia, Sufism's wider and deeper spread from the late Middle Ages cemented both the sacred language of Islam (Arabic) and cosmopolitan languages or lingua francas (e.g., Persian). Yet, this spreading also necessarily involved the use, patronage, and very development – linguistically, but also in terms of its social significance – of countless regional vernaculars. In some places, Sufis were pioneers of this vernacularisation; elsewhere, they followed rulers who adopted local tongues (§9.2.1–§9.2.2).[104] On the other hand, the significance of a Sufi legitimising a ruler's political authority declined from the sixteenth century. One cause was a shift from early modern rulers in the Islamicate world 'associating themselves with charismatic forms of Sufism in the sixteenth century', only to then move 'in favour of a more legalistic Islam (whether Sufi or otherwise) in the seventeenth century.'[105]

A prime yet peculiar example of the first trend is the emergence of the Safavi order as a temporal power shortly after its conversion to Shiʿism, which underpinned changes in kingship palpable beyond Safavid Iran, not least the Mughal world (§8.3) and in Java and Sumatra.[106] A king's patronage of either a particular Sufi order or living/deceased holy man certainly did not cease after the sixteenth century as the second trend took over; it must therefore have had a much wider valence than merely being a means of political legitimation. Indeed, Indo-Muslim kings continued to be buried in funerary complexes of Sufi *dargahs*. Aurangzeb was buried beside his favoured saint at Khuldabad in the early eighteenth century and the tomb of the first independent ruler of Hyderabad – a Mughal satrapy – was later built nearby, the whole complex dating back to the times of the Tughluqs' southern expansion and subsequent, successive patronage by the Bahmanis, Nizam Shahis, and Faruqis.[107] All this stands as evidence of the deep and manifold significance of Sufi Islam, and the extent to which it *was* Islam in India.

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[103] Green, *Sufism*, 101.

[104] Ibid, 103–12. Persian, of course, was initially a vernacular – but that time was long gone by the period covered in this book.

[105] Ibid, 129. On the latter trend, see: *op. cit.*, 154–74; §7.3.3.

[106] Ibid, 130–54, which roves over the Ottoman Empire, Safavid Iran, the Mughal and Deccan realms, the Malay states, Morocco, the Songhay Empire, and the Funj Sultanate. See, also: Newman, *Safavid Iran*.

[107] Michell and Philon, *Islamic Architecture*, 81.

2.3 Tantra and the Naths

Emerging roughly around the same time as Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism, Tantra 'arose among nonconformist devotees of Shiva and Shakti.'[108] Shiva is the 'all-powerful anarchic destroyer of worlds who delights in transcending social and religious boundaries'; hence, the earliest Tantric texts revolved around Shiva or his Tantric persona as Bhairava, associated with cremation grounds.[109] Shakti is divine feminine power, an all-pervading and universal force, who is identified with the 'Great Goddess' (among Shaktas) or else with Durga (among Shiva-Shaktas), and also with the bloodthirsty warrior-cum-loving mother goddesses known collectively as the Matrikas ('Mothers').[110] By the seventh or eighth centuries, the Matrikas evolved into the 'seductive yet dangerous Yoginis' – the shapeshifting, 'reigning witch-like goddesses of Tantric Hinduism'.[111] Tantric gods were thus far from benign, more often destructive or bloodthirsty, and associated with sex and death.

Tantra was not a separate religion as such; rather, it spread by influencing and infiltrating India's various belief systems – namely, orthodox or Brahmanical Hinduism – as well as contemporary religious movements, such as Buddhism and Bhakti.[112] By the ninth to tenth centuries, Tantra had spread across the Indian subcontinent and would continue to spread further afield; Tantric Buddhism (Vajrayana) spread to southeast and east Asia, and was important in the Ming court.[113] Yet, paradoxically, it was the emphasis on 'ritual transgression of the orthodox codes of conduct prescribed by these dominant traditions', such as engaging with the taboo to harness 'the repressed powers of traditionally forbidden practices and substances', that made Tantra popular.[114] Take, as a first example, Tantra's affirmation of the female body and the feminine energy. This runs counter to beliefs concerning purity/impurity associated with Vedic or Brahmanical Hinduism by which, for instance, menstruating women are deemed pollutive and prohibited from entering such spaces as temple precincts.[115] Taboo substances – meat, fish, and bodily fluids (menstrual blood, semen, urine) and remains (ash) – are instead seen as powerful substances by Tantric practitioners, to be consumed or brought close to the body and also offered to the deities.[116]

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[108] Ramos, *Tantra*, 12. Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 27–40, provides a south India-centred perspective on the history of Shiva-Shakti worship.

[109] Ramos, *Tantra*, 27.

[110] Ibid, 44, for citation, and 43–65.

[111] Ibid, 54.

[112] Ibid, 27–40; Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 40–44. Most recently on the interpenetration and subsequent revivification of Bhakti in early modern times by Tantric, yogic, ascetic, and Sufi currents, as well as changes in the religio-political and cultural realms, see: Burchett, *Genealogy of Devotion*, especially 29–126.

[113] Ramos, *Tantra*, 114–71.

[114] Ibid, citations 12 and 9, respectively.

[115] Ibid, 8, 20–21.

[116] Ibid, 15–18.

Second, and against the emphasis placed by other Hindu and Buddhist schools on worldly renunciation and austerity, yoga and meditation as means to enlightenment, the Tantric view is that the path to *moksha* (liberation) and *nirvana* need not lie in either abnegating or escaping this world.[117] Instead of transcending a world charged with power, Tantrikas (Tantric practitioners) believe they 'can sublimate it and magically transform reality itself' by channelling and internalising Shakti and identifying with Tantric gods.[118] In so doing, Tantrikas believe they can reach enlightenment/liberation or achieve worldly success and supernatural power – to live longer, obtain worldly power or riches, gain protection from evil, and even take flight or become invisible.[119] To channel the Yoginis' power, a Tantrika might feed them what Brahmanical Hindus would deem 'impure' substances.[120] All this was rather different to orthodox Hinduism, which treated gods as external forces – gods, moreover, who are seldom like the ferocious and sexually charged deities of Tantric tradition – and which demarcated many of the very boundaries transgressed by followers of Tantra.

One consequence was Tantra's appeal to social groups marginalised by Brahmanical religion by virtue of their gender (women) or social background (Shudras, 'untouchables').[121] Tantra was also popular among those at the opposite end of the social spectrum. Because of the emphasis on the sublimation of power in Tantric tradition, and as its female deities were believed 'to offer protection for kingdoms against epidemics or enemy forces, and to assist in the acquisition of new territories and the destruction of opponents', temples dedicated to the Yoginis were supported by royal patrons; this development was particularly evident in the upper Gangetic plain in north India between the tenth and fourteenth centuries.[122] Hardly an underground or even a subaltern movement, therefore, royal patronage was in fact a part of Tantra's spread since its earliest days, and this continued in the early modern era. Having laboured to find Brahmans willing to declare him a bona fide Kshatriya and perform the Vedic investiture rites at his coronation, Shivaji nevertheless continued his family's association with their patron goddess – Tulja Bhavani, a Shakta deity – and sought Tantric consecration to grant him an almost shamanic power and invincibility in war, to take but one example from our period.[123]

To understand Tantra's development in early modern times, we must make sense of a new yoga tradition – Hatha yoga ('yoga of force'). Although yoga had long been practised by renunciant ascetics, early modern Hatha yoga texts suggested it was available to anyone.[124] Awakening Kundalini ('She Who Is Coiled'), which was an individual's source of Shakti, was the key goal of Hatha yoga practice. Kundalini is imagined as a serpent coiled inside the yogic body that exists inside our physical frame and consists of energy centres (*chakras*) linked by channels (*nadis*) through which life-force (*prana*) flows. She is aroused through breath control and the performance of postures, rising through the central *nadi* and flowing into the *chakras*, infusing them with power. Shiva resides in the cranial *chakra* as pure consciousness (*purusha*), so that Kundalini's ascent eventually climaxes in a Tantric sexual rite within the body between Shiva and Shakti.[125] In contrast to earlier Tantric teachings prescribing the ingestion or dissemination of bodily fluids, Hatha yoga texts suggest the value of avoiding ejaculation and instead purposefully propelling fluids through the body. The long-term aim of this internalisation and channelling of Shakti into union with Shiva was either to trigger a liberated state or obtain worldly and supernatural powers. This opened Tantra to those who had previously been unenthusiastic about engaging in more transgressive acts. The visual representation of these ideas and practices became a frequent subject of artistic production under royal patronage, while some Rajput rulers are known to have practised Hatha yoga.[126]

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[117] Ibid, 13

[118] Ibid, 13.

[119] Ibid, 15.

[120] Ibid, 54.

[121] Ibid, 18–19.

[122] Ibid, 56.

[123] Or so it is alleged/remembered in a Maratha hagiography and a Sanskrit account of the latter rites, which is revealing in any case; see: Sarkar, 'The Goddess'.

The Nath order was a Tantric yogic sect mainly based in northern India and founded in the later medieval period. The Naths 'popularised the integration of Tantric methods for raising Kundalini with Hatha yoga practices' and 'held political sway with Rajput rulers', while the Mughals – not only Akbar, but also Jahangir and even Aurangzeb – were also 'attracted to the spiritual and physical discipline of Hatha yoga, along with the otherworldly reputations of its practitioners and their alchemical elixirs.'[127] This is revealed by Rajput and Mughal paintings of Naths and textual evidence of discourse or dealings with Nath practitioners, as well as the grants of land made to them.[128] Aside from the Naths and the practice of Hatha yoga, other forms of Tantra remained popular in early modern courts, and not just those in the northern Rajput and Indo-Muslim states or the southern Hindu kingdoms. As noted by Imma Ramos, the 'most compelling testament to the enduring appeal of the Yoginis as mediators of supernatural power' came from the court of the Bijapur sultan, 'Ali 'Adil Shah I (r. 1558–80). After defeating the Vijayanagara armies in 1565, the Bijapur sultan set about preparing the *Nujum al-'Ulum* ('Stars of the Sciences'), an esoteric work produced as a manuscript with pictorial illustrations. One chapter describes 140 Yoginis and their power to grant a ruler victory in battle.[129]

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[124] Readers of these Sansrkit texts were usually Brahman males (§10.1, §10.3), but some refer to women and also to householders; see: Mallinson, 'Hatha Yoga', 779, and *passim* for a historical and theoretical guide to the evolving tradition and its texts.

[125] Ramos, *Tantra*, 72.

[126] Ibid, 72–80.

[127] Ibid, 81–82.

[128] Ibid, 81–85.

Tantra may have been at odds with Brahmanical Hinduism, not least because it challenged the Brahmanical order and the concepts of purity/pollution, but it was appealing to two other early modern religious communities. First, to Bhakti leaders of various stripes, although the articulation of an anti-Tantric, anti-yogi position was becoming more common in our period.[130] Second, and more reciprocally, to Sufis.[131] Naths are thought to have frequented Sufi communal kitchens while Sufi orders appropriated certain Tantric practices as they acclimated to the Indian context. Hatha yoga appealed to Sufis because it affirmed 'corporeality and the harnessing of the body as a sacred instrument and microcosmic mirror of the universe.'[132] This is revealed by the translation of the Arabic version of a lost treatise on Hatha yoga into Persian by the Sufi master, Muhammad Ghawth of Gwalior, in the mid-sixteenth century, known as the *Bahr al-Hayat* ('Ocean of Life'). It circulated widely among Sufis, and not only in India, for it was enthusiastically cited by an Anatolian Sufi master who noted that yogic practices had been 'absorbed' into Indian Sufism.[133] It was also reproduced and illustrated for Jahangir (then Prince Salim) in the last years of Akbar's reign.[134] Other pictures from courtly centres demonstrate the blurring of Sufi and yogi identities. One link is the wine cup: forbidden in Islam and Brahmanical Hinduism, it was popular among Sufis – both as a metaphor for divine intoxication and as an actual consumable substance to aid the passage into devotional, trance-like states – and among Tantrikas. (The Tantrikas also consumed *bhang*).[135] Hardly surprising, in this context, is the fact of a Sufi poet, Waris Shah, reworking the story of a dejected and disconsolate Muslim lover renouncing worldly concerns to become a Nath yogi, to which we shall return.[136]

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[129] Ibid, 106–08. See, also: Hutton, *Bijapur*, 83–96, on the valence and possible meaning of *yogini* images.

[130] See: Burchett, *Genealogy of Devotion*, especially 169–94, which contrasts the yoga-ascetic *bhaktas* of the Ramanandi *sampradaya* with the Tantric Nath ascetics, and 239–75.

[131] It bears remembering, however, that the expression of Bhakti thought by Sufis 'remained thoroughly within the framework of the Islamic mystical tradition, and such Hindu influences […] seem to have been selectively borrowed only when they could serve as supporting buttresses for this framework.' – Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 152, for citation, and 151–55, for explication. See, also: Gandhi, 'The Prince'.

[132] Ramos, *Tantra*, 87.

[133] Ernst, 'Islamization of Yoga', argues of one Arabic-language version that it 'tells us a great deal more about its Muslim readers than it does about yoga' (203). Earlier, Eaton in *Bengal Frontier*, 77–82, observed that the work is not 'syncretic' (i.e., a new synthesis), but rather places 'two independent and self-contained worldviews […] alongside one another' (81).

[134] Ramos, *Tantra*, 87–90. Orthmann, in 'Humayun's Search', speculates as to its even earlier influence on the Mughals.

[135] Ramos, *Tantra*, 90–95.

[136] Deol, 'Punjabi Poetry', 149–52, for the poet's murky biography.

2.4 Other Devotional Traditions: the Sants and the Sikhs

2.4.1 Caste and Anti-Clericalism

Bhakti and Brahmanical religion were not necessarily at odds, as we have seen. Yet, some leaders emerging within the Bhakti milieu *were* highly critical of caste and other aspects of orthodox Hinduism, not least the Sants or poet-saints. The most famous was Kabir. He lived as an uneducated weaver in or around Banaras and disparaged orthodox Muslim and Hindu praxis alike, as well as their associated rituals and injustices (e.g., oppression of lower castes by upper castes). He spoke of god as an abstract and transcendent moral entity sometimes referred to as *satguru* ('true guide') – certainly not a Vedic god, therefore.[137] His aim was union with the divine, separation from whom was torment. Kabir was highly influential, occupying an important place in the scriptures of other Sant lineages or communities (*panths*) – viz., the Nanakpanth and followers of Dadu Dayal or Dadupanthis – as well as the Ramanandis and some Krishna devotees.[138]

A number of similarities link the Sufis and Sants, including the primacy of devotion and the conception of God as without form and attributes (*nirguna*).[139] Yet, there were also distinguishing features of the major Sant lineages from Sufi Islam.[140] Take, for instance, Ravidas, another outstanding Sant figure, who was born into a leatherworking caste, and thus seen as ritually unclean in the frame of Brahmanical religion.[141] Ravidas, like Kabir and other Sant leaders, belonged to a lower-evaluated caste group. They were generally critical of the religious establishment. They questioned the role of priests, idol worship, ritual, pilgrimages, the institution of caste, and hence the belief in reincarnation. Their devotional compositions reveal a resistance to Brahmanisation (and associated Sanskritisation), yet also to the ritualist aspects of Sufism.[142] Unlike their counterparts in Europe on the eve of the Reformation, these anticlerical reformers were mostly 'outsiders' to the ecclesiastical establishment.[143]

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[137] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 128.

[138] Pauwels, 'Diatribes', 291–92. Most recently on Dadu Dayal, see: Rajpurohit, 'Dadu Panth'.

[139] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 126–27.

[140] On the formation of these lineages, their distinction from one another and from Sufi orders, and how Sant movements changed over time, see: Gold, *Lord as Guru*, especially 55–116, 173–220.

[141] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 26–27.

[142] For nuance, see: Horstmann, 'Sant and Sufi'; Pauwels, 'Diatribes', 291–92. For their part, certain Brahmans also issued anti-Brahman and anti-caste critiques. These have been described by Novetzke as a 'Brahmin double' – that is, a 'discursively constructed ["bad"] Brahmin' that helped to deflect or diffuse criticism and thereby enable 'the ["good"] Brahmin performer or composer to maintain a position of importance as a Brahmin in the world of *bhakti* and the larger premodern public sphere' – Novetzke, 'Brahmin Double', here 232.

[143] See, for instance: Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 3–120, and *passim*; Wooding, *Tudor England*, 87–119.

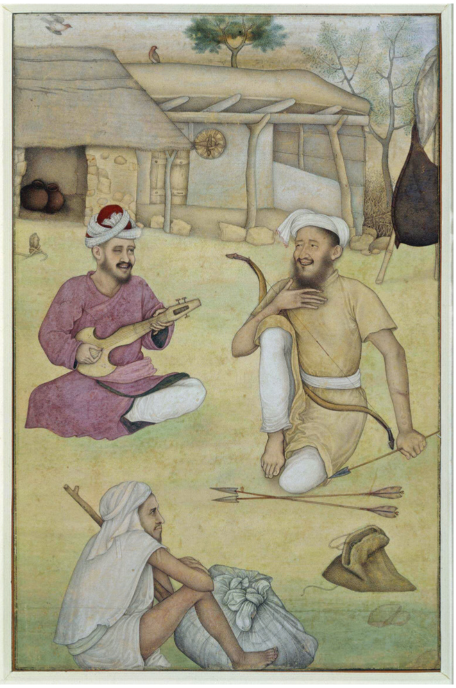

Fig. 2F Washerman listening to a Singer and Musician (watercolour by the Mughal artist Bichitr, c. 1645)

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IM. 27-1925

The place of such poetry, sung in vernacular languages for a fairly non-elite audience (Fig. 2F), is a point of intersection between the Sants and certain Vaishnava Bhakti leaders of the times. Kabir – like Tulsidas and Mira Bai – chiefly composed songs known as *padas* 'with a refrain (*teka*) set to a certain rhythm (*tala*) and with a dominant mood (*raga*)' that were classed not as poetic literature (*kabita*) but as *bhajans* – 'a means to express devotion.' If their compositions are available to us today, it is because they were subsequently committed to writing. In this process, and the modifications to early versions that followed, a few hundred compositions exploded into the thousands that are attributed to the major Bhakti poets, an exception to this phenomenon being Tulsidas, who penned his compositions himself.[144] Guru Nanak may have been born into a high-caste family, but his thought – and hence the religion we call Sikhism – emerged within this milieu.

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[144] Bangha, 'Writing Devotion', 141.

2.4.2 Nanak and Sikhism

Sikhism vexes categorisation, however.[145] Some view Nanak's teachings as derivative of those Naths popular during his lifetime in Punjab or else of Kabir's *nirguna bhakti* thought, yet this negates whatever contemporaries found so original and compelling that they became the guru's followers, to say nothing of the new customs and ceremonies that developed as Nanak's thought was propagated by his successors.[146] Others see it as a new and syncretic tradition, thus situating Nanak's teachings in an inventive and competitive 'religious marketplace' (to borrow from Samira Sheikh), teeming with Sufis and Bhakti leaders of various sorts, among much else, except that this perspective ignores the guru's often *critical* engagement with other religious communities.[147]

Nanak lived in Punjab, where Shaiva, Vaishanava, and Shakta practice was popular, as was devotion to Sufi *pirs*. Nanak *had* travelled to numerous holy places, at the same time familiarising himself with a variety of vernacular or folk traditions. He *was* conversant in the Vedic and Quranic teachings and in the beliefs and practices of different communities of Hindus (including the Nath, Tantric, and yogic schools) and Muslims (including various Sufi *tariqas*) as well as Jains and Buddhists. Nanak questioned, however, why the body must be put through arduous yogic exercises as Nath and Siddha devotees did, metamorphosing such external practices and others – such as decorating Hindu deities with sandalwood paste, performing *arathi* (Hindu worship), and the *sama* (spiritual concerts by Sufis) – into internal or mental processes. Similarly, he shifted the exclusive, sacred space of temples and mosques into the accessible, inclusive, social world of the everyday, while defining the divine as a transcendent, singular, eternal truth existing all around and within us rather than somewhere else 'out there' (i.e., like Allah), and certainly not in any corporeal or gendered manifestations (i.e., gods, deities).[148]

In this, we can discern a distinct ontology in Nanak's thought, but also an anti-clericalism.[149] Born into a caste-Hindu family, the boy Nanak would be expected to undertake his initiation (or 'rebirth') into the faith, marked by a rite of passage ceremony (the *upanayana*) in which he would wear the sacred thread for the first time as a marker of his being 'twice born'. But a story

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[145] The same might be said of Eknath (c. 1533–99), who was a Brahman yet also a vernacular saint-poet, against the orthodox/Sanskrit/Brahman versus popular/vernacular/low-caste distinction implicit in many studies of *bhakti*, described below. See: Keune, 'Eknath'. On the problems of this binary distinction, see also: Venkatkrishnan, 'Devas of Banares'.

[146] Most influentially, see: McLeod, *Exploring Sikhism*, 1–36. Grewal, *Sikhs*, 27–29, distinguishes Nanak's first-hand awareness not only of socio-economic realities, but also of the politico-administrative system, as central to his unique critique of moral and spiritual problems and to his philosophy. On new rites and customs: *op. cit.*, 60.

[147] Sheikh, *Forging*, 130.

[148] Singh, *First Sikh*, 14, 17–18, 28–30.

[149] For an introductory guide to Nanak's thought, see: Grewal, *Sikhs*, 29–39; Singh, *First Sikh*, 101–50. See, also: Singh, '*Gurmat*'.

'remembered' (constructed?) in the *Nanak Janamsakhis* – biographical-cum-hagiographical works on Nanak's life, most written long after his death – show him rejecting the ceremony and questioning its meaning in an act of 'spontaneous unbelief'.[150] Taking another example, in one of passage from the *Adi Granth*, Bhai Gurdas used the term *ulta khel* (opposite play) to convey the revolution Nanak ushered in, by which the four *varnas* would become one, the rich and poor become equal, and the Ganges begin to flow upstream.[151] The critique of Brahmanical religion encompassed a critique of caste and untouchability, of notions of purity and pollution, questioning such beliefs as strict vegetarianism and examining the implications of 'impurity' in the form of misogyny and the exclusion of women. The subordinate position of women in upper-caste Hindu society, it should be noted, was a particular source of reproach in Sikh thought. Guru Amar Das (1479–1574), for example, railed against *sati*, the practice of ritual self-immolation by widows upon their husbands' funeral pyres.[152]

A related issue concerns Nanak's attitudes toward Muslim holy men and theologians. On the one hand, Nanak is said to have preferred Sufis to those Muslim scholars knowledgeable of Islamic religious and legal texts and collectively known as the *ulama* (§3.3). On the other hand, he was nevertheless critical of *shaikhs* who impeded direct devotion by creating a rigid order of new rules, institutions, and practices (especially those around sainthood), not to mention those who had accepted grants of land from Indian rulers and thus lived in the pocket of the state (which he also condemned).[153] In this, he held common ground with his almost exact contemporary, the Catholic theologian and luminary of the northern Renaissance, Erasmus (1466–1536), who pronounced his own critique of hagiolatry.[154]

Credited with producing and disseminating – via the new technology of print – the first English-language translations of the Hebrew and Greek Bible, William Tyndale (c.1494–1536) is fairly typical of a growing swell of early moderns who sought to challenge the hegemony of the religious establishment.[155] If Europe had such figures as Erasmus and Tyndale, early modern India had Kabir and Nanak, whose message flourished even in the absence of the printing press. Indeed, social critique and anti-establishmentarianism is one of the threads linking Nanak and Kabir, another being their popular verse and the place of *kirtan* in their devotees' worship. In 1604, Guru Arjan compiled some 974 hymns composed by Guru Nanak into the *Adi Granth*. He worked with his amanuensis, Bhai Gurdas, who was born not long after

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[150] Singh, *First Sikh*, 72–73. The coinage is Huizinga's from *Autumntide*, 245, in which he describes a response to 'life supersaturated with religious content and forms'.

[151] Cole, 'Sikh Interactions', 250–59.

[152] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 21.

[153] Cole, 'Sikh Interactions', 250–59; Singh, *First Sikh*, 158–72; Grewal, *Sikhs*, 33–34.

[154] Huizinga, *Autumntide*, 216–29, 261.

[155] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 129–37, and *passim*.

Nanak's passing and whose life cut across the guruships of the first five of Nanak's successors, making him an important witness and carrier of knowledge.[156] Nanak's verses frequently refer to their author as *dhadhi* (bard, minstrel), referencing those wandering bards patronised to eulogise religious figures, folk heroes, and those who had performed valorous deeds; or as *shair* and *kavi* (poet or seer), these words deriving from Arabic/Persian and Sanskrit, reflecting the open cultural milieu Nanak consciously inhabited, if not crafted through his boundary crossings.[157] Performance to crowds incorporating song and entertainment, it might be noted, was part of popular religion outside India, too.[158]

The hymns of Nanak's composition are accompanied by those of other Sikh gurus, all alongside verses by Hindu *bhagats* (saints), Sufi *shaikhs*, and other popular poets and holy men – including Kabir.[159] The text is not syncretic, for its constituent elements are not blended but sit side-by-side – what one scholar characterises as 'a vertical expansion of the spiritual consciousness shared by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.'[160] A further aspect of the pluralism of early Sikhism is demonstrated in the *Nanak Janamsakhis*. These were written by Nanak's followers long after his death and should be treated more as hagiographic and historical works than as biographies. They remain a popular component of Sikh devotional literature, however, and are revealing about how the early Sikh community chose to remember and present the first guru. They exist in a variety of renditions and were often produced in pictorial form or with pictorial illustrations, the varied aesthetic forms of which reflect the local artistic traditions in the places of production, which was wherever in north India significant communities of followers existed.[161] The images of Nanak found in these manuscripts project a kind of pluralism; so, for example, he is shown in some pictures wearing a *tilak* (a mark on the forehead worn by Hindus) and a *seli topi* (worn by Sufis).[162]

2.4.3 Sikh Sectarianism

There were limits to any such pluralism, however. The *Adi Granth* was the first authoritative book of Sikh scriptures, marking a turning-point in the development of the Sikh community and of Sikhism as a tradition.[163] Yet, what was omitted is as important as what was included. The *Adi Granth* compiled by Guru Arjan contained verses not only by Nanak, but also the first four of his successors and four other figures (Satta, Balvand, Sundar, and Mardana) associated with the early Sikh *panth*, as well as material attributed to a group of Brahman panegyrists associated with Guru Arjan, thirteen Sants (including Kabir and Ravidas), and two Sufis.[164] Absent, however, is anything composed by Prithi Chand, who was himself 'a devotional poet in the style of the early Sikh gurus', although his compositions lacked literary greatness.[165] Scholars have interpreted Arjan's very desire to produce a cannon (the *Adi Granth*), and his decision to exclude Prithi Chand's verse, as a means of limiting interpolation by such figures.[166] After Arjan's death, Prithi Chand continued to contest the *guruship* – which passed not to him but to Arjan's son, Guru Hargobind.

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[156] They were accompanied by 'the bards Balvand and Satta of the Mardana lineage to ensure continuity in the singing and musical style.' – Singh, *First Sikh*, 39. Issues of the authenticity of Arjan's recitations to Bhai Gurdas were of sufficient importance to the *panth* from the earliest days that a tale explaining how Arjan gave an accurate rendering of the *bhagats*' teachings and compositions came into being; see: Deol, 'Sikh Tradition', 169. On compilation and canonisation as a 'collaborative' 'redrafting' process, see: Singh, 'Granth'.

[157] Singh, *First Sikh*, 5.

[158] Nobuyuki, 'Mendicant Monks'.

[159] Singh, 'Sikh Music', for a guide to hymns and devotional performance.

[160] Singh, *First Sikh*, 39.

[161] McLeod, *Early Sikh*, comprehensively analyses this corpus; Singh, *First Sikh*, 68–69.

[162] Singh, *First Sikh*, 5. See, also: Luis, 'Guru Nanak Shah Faqir'.

A rival lineage was born, a key figure in which was Prithi Chand's own successor, Miharban, who had been educated by Prithi Chand and Arjan in a broad curriculum and who possessed considerable literary talent.[167] He composed devotional verse and various exegetical discourses – on Kabir and the *bhagats*, on Hindu *bhakts* and *yogis*, on Nanak – that reflect his efforts to explain complex philosophical beliefs associated with the Nanakpanths.[168] Over the seventeenth century, the rift between the gurus and the Prithi Chand-Mirharban lineage solidified, described by scholars in terms of the orthodoxy or mainstream versus an unorthodox and marginal sect. Of course, this is not a figment of historians' imaginations, instead reflecting the way the guruship and its outgrowth – Khalsa Sikhism – cast the Prithi Chand-Mirharban lineage. They were known derogatively as the Minas (from *mina*, meaning charlatan or scoundrel) and designated as a dissident group and among 'the *panj mel*, or five groups with which relations are forbidden, in the earliest Khalsa *rahitnamas* (codes of conduct).'[169] They were not the only such group, however, and sectarian dissent probably climaxed in the seventeenth century. The Udasis (lit. 'detached') – who were more popular than the Minas – traced their origins to Sri Chand, one of Nanak's sons, and sought to pursue an ascetic and renunciationist path, their theology rooted in a Vedantic interpretation of Sikhism that would later put them at odds with orthodox Sikhs.[170]

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[163] Whether or not its compilation was completed in one phase under Arjan's auspices (as so often portrayed) or much more gradually over a longer period, multiple recensions of the text soon came into being, some incorporating extra material from diverse sources and traditions or else altering the order of the work's contents. Practically from the outset, therefore, the *Adi Granth* was not a single, stable work. Questions of authorship, canonicity, and the history of the text have been examined, most recently and in the face of hostility, by: Deol, 'Adi Granth'; Idem, 'Non-Canonical Compositions'.

[164] Deol, 'Sikh Tradition', 178.

[165] Syan, *Sikh Militancy*, 52.

[166] Ibid, 52; Deol, 'Mīṇās', 173–74.

[167] In a similar same way, Angad's sons saw his spiritual establishment at Khadur as their patrimony, forcing Amar Das to found a new centre at Goindwal; Grewal, *Sikhs*, 47–49, 62–63.

[168] Deol, 'Mīṇās', 180–81.

[169] Ibid, 173, for citation, and *passim*.

The relative success of the gurus in expanding their following was also a factor. In Nanak's time and immediately after his death, the Nanakpanths were predominately Khatris, a relatively high-caste group and a marked contrast with the largely low-caste followings of other Sants.[171] In Angad's guruship, a community kitchen (*langar*) was established, and his disciples widened beyond Khatris, encompassing those of lower social standing.[172] That said, the geographic expansion and social diversification of the *panth* in Amar Das' time perhaps owed something to the Khatri's trading networks, which were laced over north India's major entrepots.[173] These developments continued under Guru Arjan, who transformed the seat of the guru into a court, and the guru himself into a king of kings and into God in human form. 'Do not be misled by his human form', it is written in the *Adi Granth*, for 'the Guru is the veritable God (*niranjan*).'[174]

However, it was from Guru Hargobind's pontificate that the guru's establishment truly became a seat of temporal power in emulation of Rajput and Mughal courts, complete with stables and horsemen for hunting (as much as military defence), as well as ateliers filled with artists and litterateurs.[175] Hargobind recruited men to form military contingents and constructed a fort opposite the Harmandir Sahib (lit. 'abode of God') or what is nowadays known as the Golden Temple in Amritsar (Fig. 2G).[176] This fort he called the *Akal Takht* ('throne of the immortal').[177] Combining grandeur with spiritual and political leadership that was compelling to a wide range of people, the Sikh gurus attracted a large following, in turn facilitating their continued militarisation, their capitalising on a wave of popular unrest to contest Mughal power, and hence their growth as a 'state within a state'.[178] Consequently, the Prithi Chand-Mirharban lineage became more marginal to the larger Sikh *panth*, although it was only in the later nineteenth or early twentieth century that it became negligible.[179]

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[170] Singh, *Heterodoxy*, especially 82–109.

[171] In spite of the gurus' scorning Brahmanical rites and customs, many of these were maintained by Khatri Sikhs: Syan, 'Debating Revolution', 1120–22. This is not surprising, being broadly comparable to the position of Jewish Christians – as opposed to Gentile Christians – regarding the maintenance of such rites as circumcision during Christianity's first decades.

[172] Hawley, 'Sikh Institutions', 316–22, on the origins and evolution of these kitchens.

[173] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 48, 50, 52, 57.

[174] As translated and cited in: Grewal, *Sikhs*, 57.

[175] Fenech, *Darbar*, 87–121, specifically on Hargobind's court, and *passim*.

[176] The current structure, and it's gilding, dates from the nineteenth century.

[177] Syan, *Sikh Militancy*, 53–54.

[178] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 67–81, for a survey of developments to the death of Gobind in 1708.

[179] Deol, 'Mīṇās', 175, 178–79; Syan, *Sikh Militancy*, 49–53.

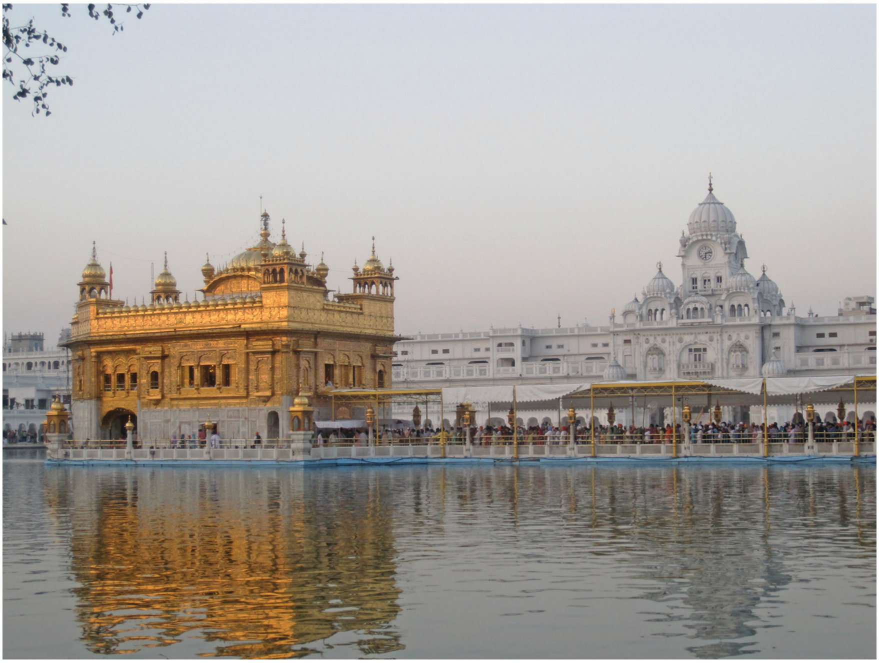

Fig. 2G The Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

2.4.4 The Sikh Khalsa as a Social and Political Movement

Focusing on the 'mainstream', then, we ought to consider developments under Guru Gobind, the tenth and last of the living/human gurus.[180] Gobind became a military leader of great renown. He created a militarised order of Sikhs called the Khalsa in a public ceremony during the spring festival (Vaisakhi) in Anandpur in 1699, to which Sikhs from across north India were invited. His initiates swore to abide by the Khalsa's newfound code of honour, as set out in texts known as *rahitnamas*, and adopted five outward signs of their faith and devotion, each with a practical and symbolic meaning.[181] The process of becoming a Khalsa Sikh 'was not simply a process of displaying faith in the Guru by adopting a particular dress code and wearing certain talismans,'

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[180] For a useful biography that contextualises the source material available for biographising Gobind's life, see: Rinehart, *Dasam Granth*, 17–36.

[181] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 77. See, however: Singh, 'Overview', 24, for the debate on when these five articles made their appearance and their origins/significance. See, also: Fenech, 'Khalsa and the Rahit'.

Hardip Singh Syan notes, but 'a complex process whereby the novice became a Kshatriya devoted to a monarch (i.e., Guru Gobind Singh).'[182] This was a very conscious choice on the guru's part, and the Khalsa would be pivotal in the next phase of Sikh *panth*'s struggle with political authority.[183] That said, it is worth noting that pro- and anti-Khalsa factions formed almost immediately, spawning a debate signalling the persistence of heterodox currents within the Sikh *panth*, which would soon after be censured as 'unorthodox' and then marginalised.[184]

Our concern here, however, is with Gobind's theology. One highly controversial compilation attributed to Gobind Singh is the *Dasam Granth* ('The Book of the Tenth Master'), although some see it as the work of his court poets, while others deem its authorship resting somewhere else entirely, not to mention the interlinked debate over whether it merits the term 'scripture' or should merely be seen as 'literature'.[185] The controversy stems from the work's contents, most of which were composed in the 1690s. They range from praise for a formless, timeless, transcendent god (as conceived by Nanak), to detailed discussions of Vishnu and his avatars, stories of other deities and of the goddess Durga. There is an 'autobiographical' account of Gobind that opens with a long genealogy tracing the guru as a descendant of the noble and courageous Vishnu avatar, Rama, as well as a considerable number of stories about women and their ingenious schemes in pursuit of illicit liaisons with men.[186] The controversy may be unreconcilable, given the state of source materials and the positions of various commentators, yet the debates pose issues that obscure other aspects of the *Dasam Granth*, Robin Rinehart argues.

The anthology *does* exist, whosoever composed/composited it, much as the guru *did* despatch some of his disciples to learn from Brahmans at Banaras, who consequently formulated a new and distinct Sikh school with an ascetic bent (the Nirmala).[187] To make sense of the anthology *in toto*, we might pause to consider Akbar's engagement with pious and learned holy men from different communities and his patronage of the translation of Indic literary classics (§3.3.3). These projects do not reflect a departure from – and certainly not a rejection of – Sunni Islam.[188] Rather, they provided a powerful new set of concepts and imagery through which to present the Mughal king (§8.2). In a comparable way, the *Dasam Granth's* content reveals the salience of Indic cosmographies and mythologies for Guru Gobind, his court, and/or his (would-be) followers at large.[189] In the 'autobiographical' account, for instance, Gobind's life is related in a much larger framework drawing on the Vedic concept of the four *yugas* or ages and thereby presents Gobind Singh as a leader and protector, one wielding temporal and spiritual power.[190]

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[182] Syan, 'Debating Revolution', 1098.

[183] *C.f.* Dhavan, *When Sparrows Became Hawks*.

[184] There was a caste axis to the divide among Delhi's Sikh community, with Khatri and Brahman Sikhs troubled by elements of the new ethical code: Syan, 'Debating Revolution'. See, also: Singh, *Heterodoxy*.

[185] See, for a careful examination of the historiography on the text as well as a disentangling of these debates and their sources: Rinehart, *Dasam Granth*, 3–16, 36–49.

[186] Rinehart, *Dasam Granth*, 4, for citation, and 23–36, for a descriptive survey of the contents.

[187] Alam, *Crisis*, 154. Another 'problematic' and related text is the *Prem Ambodh* (c. 1693), which includes a reworking of Mirabai's story amidst those of fifteen other *bhagats*/*bhaktas*; see: Hawley and Mann, 'Mirabai'.

[188] For a similar argument about Sufi engagement with Vaishnava lyric poetry as not quite syncretistic, see: Orsini, 'Krishna Is the Truth of Man'.

Indic mythology is replete with gods and demons, with stories of the good battling the bad to preserve *dharma*. In the compositions concerning Durga, what matters – Rinehart insists – is not whether or not goddess worship is advocated ('against' earlier teachings, if so). Rather, in a context where Shakti was closely related to political power, goddess mythology plays an important role in explaining the 'proper maintenance of cosmic order and the nature of leadership'.[191] The most contentious compositions, however, are the stories of deceitful queens and princesses and their sexual liaisons. Tales of women digging underground tunnels or being shot out of cannons while chanting a special protective mantra, all to steal away and be with their young and virile beloveds, or of hoodwinking or even poisoning their old and fat husbands, seem perplexing at first.[192] They might, however, be usefully compared to such Indic literary works as the Sanskrit *Panchatantra*, which aimed to 'illustrate practical wisdom and shrewdness rather than advocating a particular moral code.'[193]

In keeping with other parts of the anthology, these stories are largely concerned with *dharma*. In the 'autobiographical' account, the maintenance of *dharma* revolves around the ruler who leads armies to create conditions in which the people might flourish. In the goddess compositions, *dharma* is seen through the lens of the ongoing battle between good and evil, gods and demons. And in these stories about women, the focus shifts to the *dharma* 'of a ruler with respect to the issue of personal relationships, especially those between men and women.'[194]

The result is neither a syncretic nor a heterodox pantheism, but certainly one that creates a space for diverse theological ideas and literary forms to sit side-by-side, thereby signalling the pluralism even at the heart of what was becoming 'orthodox' Sikhism.[195] To say such works are evidence of the 'Hindu impress' upon Sikhism, as some have simplistically proposed, or to take the issue of authorship to task, is to miss the point, therefore. The anthology's contents not only reflect those challenges facing the Sikhs around the time of its writing and compositing – namely, the fraught and increasingly conflictual relations with the Mughal state – but also make use of extant and popular literary forms, cosmologies, and beliefs to make the case for Sikh leadership and for Sikhism.

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[189] Such cosmologies also figured in the *Nanak Janamsakhis* and in Mina literature, even as the latter's Mina authorship – and not the stories of Vishnu/Ram themselves – was erased to make texts palatable to the larger *panth*: McLeod, *Early Sikh*, 64–70; Deol, 'Mīṇās', 182–83. See, also: Fenech, *Darbar*, 148–64, which reads the *Dasam Granth* not in relation to cosmology, but 'Indo-Timurid' courtliness.

[190] Rinehart, *Dasam Granth*, 50–66.

[191] Ibid., 69, for citation, and 71–102, for a descriptive outline of the compositions referring to the goddess, especially 81 on Shakti and the Matrikas.

[192] Ibid, 114–41, for an overview of these stories.

[193] Ibid, 142.

[194] Ibid, 147, for citation, and 152–59, for a useful discussion.

[195] Alam, *Crisis*, 154.

We shall revisit Sikh thought later in this book, focusing on discourses of violence (§6.3.2). Worth noting at this point, however, is the broader landscape within which the trajectory of 'orthodox' Sikhism can be situated. All the major Sant traditions emerged as supposedly 'peaceful' movements, even expressing criticism of the *hatha-yoga* masters or *tantrikas* who sought to harness supernatural powers to make violence or win wars.[196] Yet, by the seventeenth century, each of these Sant movements had developed military wings: the spearheading by the Kabirpanth of the Satnami uprising in 1672, the Dadupanth's paramilitary of Rajput or ascetic warriors, and the steady militarisation of the Sikh community from Hargobind's time.[197]

Whatever the growing invective found in Sant Bhakti verse against hierarchy and those elite interlocutors standing between the divine and the masses, or the egalitarian teachings of Nanak, the world was not upturned and did not collapse in the two or three centuries before c. 1750. Why? On the one hand, this was because the radical messages of devotionalist preachers became routinised into 'religion', blunting its charge, while also being subdued through appropriation by powerful rulers (in the orthodox form of Bhakti, at least). On the other hand, Brahmanism accommodated itself to vernacular audiences and courtly patrons, yet also actively fortified itself in the face of these critiques; hence the growing influence of Advaita philosophy, a kind of 'big tent' Hinduism that could house (subsume?) numerous discrete beliefs, some of its proponents striving to reconcile the seemingly opposite worlds of elite, Sanskrit, Brahmanical culture and that of more popular, vernacular, Bhakti currents.[198] But the Mughals' 'self-conscious withdrawal from the position of adjudication in many matters of dispute in theology and religious law previously occupied by *dharmic* kings' also created a vacuum; 'Brahman assemblies and centres of scriptural authority' thus 'asserted themselves to fill the vacuum.'[199] Banaras, the 'city of Shiva', was at once a site of imperial patronage of Brahmans and became a new, unprecedented, and highly prestigious arena for the expression of a newly confident Brahmanic religious authority in consequence of these early modern developments; the outcome was a new phase of Brahmanisation.[200]

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[196] Syan, *Sikh Militancy*, 17.

[197] Ibid, 16. Gold, 'Dadu-Panth', examines the martial and ascetic tradition in that order as a special case (vis-à-vis the Kabirpanth and Nanakpanth/early Sikhs). On the Sikhs, see: §6.3.2.

[198] Here, I draw upon: O'Hanlon and Washbrook, 'Religious Cultures', 134. See, also: Venkatkrishnan, 'Devas of Banaras'; Novetzke, 'Brahmin Double'.

[199] O'Hanlon and Washbrook, 'Religious Cultures', 136.

2.5 Conclusion

2.5.1 A World of Saints and Miracles

Written in the mid-eighteenth century, Waris Shah's *Hir Ranjha* is perhaps the most famous Punjabi-language literary work. Often described as the *Romeo and Juliet* of Indian literature, being a tale of tragic romance, it blends the culture of Punjabi oral storytelling with the Persian *masnavi* and *qissa*, which is a kind of epic poem – probably intended for performance – popular in the region.[201] It revolves around Ranjha, who abandons his ancestral lands only to arrive in the village inhabited by Hir, whose father employs the footloose young man. Hir becomes entranced with Ranjha and the two meet surreptitiously for years until their secret is revealed and Hir is married off, for Ranjha is deemed inadequate as a groom because of his inferior social standing. Disconsolate, Ranjha becomes an initiate of a yogic order and wanders the land, one day chancing upon Hir living her new matrimonial existence. Waris Shah's is the most famous and commonly retold version of the story; others unfold in subtly different ways. Ranjha's use of his supernatural powers as a yogi in forcing the hand of the king to permit their reunion is one alternate, the thwarting of the tale's happy ending by Hir's poisoning at her family's own hand is another.[202]

Waris' poem captures many of the beliefs, holy and lay believers or 'religious' people, and the religious pluralism characteristic of the times. Its *dramatis personae*, for instance, is cast widely from the larger set of actors peopling the early modern religious landscape: Sufis, yogis, ascetics, Sunni clerics, and Brahmans. Also significant is Ranjha's becoming a yogi. Apart from the drama of this act of renunciation, the discourses on becoming and being a yogi serve as a vehicle for discussions voicing social critique – which also appear in other parts of the poem – centring on norms regarding gender, on caste and social status, and ultimately, on religious authority.[203] All this reflects, secondly, two key developments in the religious sphere of the times: the popularity of devotionalist movements offering a more direct connection with the divine and a kind of anti-establishmentarianism espoused by many of the leaders of these devotional cults or orders. Supernatural abilities and their link to temporal power are yet another feature of some religious movements of the period. And, finally, there is the fact of the story's immense popularity. Aside from its literary appeal and compelling plot, it reflects the plural landscape of pre-colonial Punjab, where sporadic conflict rooted in a sense of difference did occur, but differences between 'confessional' groups were more blurry than they are today, whereas exchange and familiarity between different groups was commonplace. Hence, the poet can call Ranjha a ('Muslim') mendicant *faqir* and a ('Hindu') yogi ascetic, all in the same breath.

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[200] See: 'O'Hanlon, 'Speaking from Siva's Temple', who observes that the loss of imperial patronage in the later seventeenth century, and then imperial fragmentation itself, adversely affected the fortunes of Banaras' Brahman intellectuals, who, ultimately, dispersed to the new regional kingdoms (notably, the Maratha court), where they legitimated arriviste dynasties (§10.3). See, also: Venkatkrishnan, 'Devas of Banaras'.

[201] Deol, 'Punjabi Poetry', especially 147–49.

[202] Ibid, especially 142–45, 152–58.

[203] Ibid, 163–68; Murphy, 'Sufis', especially 293–307.

Johan Huizinga, in his rich historical portrait of northern Europe on the eve of the Reformation (§11.2), painted a world of mendicant friars, of living and deceased saints, of temporal princes hungry for miracles, and of people readily lurching between disdain and irreverence for 'religion' and into sudden ecstatic piety.[204] Ordinary people and the high-born sometimes felt so inspired as to forsake their homes and families to dedicate their lives to some holy man or other, while some burghers in Europe 'decorated the tall seat of honour they erected for him with the costliest tapestries one could buy.'[205] Crowds were regularly stirred up by itinerant preachers, sometimes for days at a time. City authorities might welcome the reconciliations and resultant peace brought about by such figures as the Dominican, Vincent Ferrer (1350–1419), yet others forbade the entry of those preachers who railed against bad government or were feared lest they kindle the bonfires of the vanities.[206] Among the latter was the infamous Dominican firebrand, Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98). His radical preaching – often at odds with the Papacy – and prophecy of Florence as the New Jerusalem so captured the imagination, that he exerted a great influence over the city's government and culture before he fell from grace and was hanged and burnt as a 'false prophet'.[207]

This was an enchanted world that held much in common with early modern India, not only in Kabir's or Nanak's time, toward the start of the epoch, but even in Waris' time, at its end. Why might this be so? Many of those beliefs described in this chapter were of long-standing and spreading over a *longue durée* reaching into the Middle Ages or earlier (e.g., Brahmanism, Tantra, Sufi Islam), even as there were important changes to their content and character in early modern times (e.g., the popularity of Kundalini yoga, Vaishnava and Tantric themes in some branches of Sikh thought). Much of the religious upsurge of early modern times, however, spoke to a more urgent hunger for salvation or righteousness, even as it contributed to the persistence of 'magical thinking' well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[208] How, then, do we square this penchant for miracles, messiahs, and saints with the changes in other dimensions of belief? How does this compare to what was happening in other parts of the world?

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[204] Huizinga, *Autumntide*, especially 261–81. Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 3–22, paints a similar picture of late medieval England.

[205] Huizinga, *Autumntide*, 16.

[206] Ibid, 14–16.

[207] Weinstein, *Savonarola*.

[208] See, for example: Oberoi, *Religious Boundaries*, 139–203.

2.5.2 Religion and the Decline of Magic?

We might begin with the Reformation, being careful not to overstate the extent to which it contributed to the 'decline of magic' in Europe, for this would give a false impression of the persistence of magical thinking and its causes in south Asia, in turn. The fulcrum of the early Reformation lay in the German lands and Switzerland, where Martin Luther in Wittenberg, Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) in Zürich, and Jean Calvin (1509-64) in Geneva – the 'Three Men of the Reformation' – formulated and propagated their thought.[209] Eschatological currents rippled across early modern Eurasia (§3.3.5), forming a critical backdrop to the Reformation. 'Everything has come to pass and is fulfilled', Martin Luther reflected in 1530, drawing on the Book of Daniel, for 'the Roman Empire is at the end, the Turk has arrived at the door, the splendour of popery has faded away, and the world is crackling in all places, as if it is going to break apart and crumble.'[210] This widespread belief that the End Times were approaching made readiness not merely necessary, but urgent; hence, the passionate impulse to reform the Church.

Among the signal events of the Reformation was Luther's presentation of his *Ninety-Five Theses on Indulgences* in 1517; such 'protest' against Catholic doctrine and practice is what earned Luther, Calvin, and others the epithet 'Protestant'. The Protestant reformers' objections were several. First, that the Papacy and Catholic Church was corrupt, profiting from believers by inventing such notions as Purgatory, inflating the number of sacraments and feast days, making those seeking confession enumerate their sins, and so forth. Moderate reformers sought to prune the branches of a faith that had been 'overloaded' by so many new customs and such intricate hagiolatry. More fiery critics saw the need for a wholescale clearance, for they felt impiety and superstition had made a home in the medieval Church.[211] Second, that much of this was possible because the Bible remained in Classical languages; hence, the Bible ought to be mediated in vernaculars known to the majority of the people, as Martin Luther proceeded to do with his translation of the New Testament in 1522 and the complete Wittenberg Bible of 1534, roughly contemporaneously with William Tyndale's efforts in English.[212] The Protestant reformers presented something new and radical, therefore, but they were not the only voices to enter the fray, for Catholics and Anabaptists also prophesied reform. The Reformation could have unfolded in numerous ways; it might never have happened at all.[213]

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[209] Recent treatments of these figures include: Roper, *Luther's World*; Gordon, *Zwingli*.

[210] Hsia, 'Introduction', xii.

[211] See, here: Huizinga, *Autumntide*, 230–32 and 245, who uses the language of 'overloading' and 'supersaturation' of intellectual life with 'religious content and forms'. See, also: *op. cit.*, 256–61; Hsia, 'Introduction', xiii.

[212] Rublack, *Protestant Europe*, 8.

Protestant ideas ruptured Western Christianity, yet Protestant theology/ideology was highly varied. This was partly because of the different backgrounds and milieus of such men as Luther and Calvin; it was also because Protestantism often took a national character as it spread across Europe and from thence around the globe.[214] Often, political motives and social preconditions directed the pace and depth of change. It was not as much from below in Henrican England as it was in the German lands, to say nothing of its suddenness, whereas in Bohemia and Poland there was arguably a prior movement for religious reform (or 'First Reformation') culminating in the Hussite Revolution of the fifteenth century.[215] In northern and central Italy, by contrast, the spread of religious ideas had no sooner begun than it was quashed and reversed, while Iberia was unscathed, instead becoming a bulwark of the Counter-Reformation.[216] Around the same time, furthermore, Mennonites and Quakers and other small communities of believers (or 'dissenters', depending on perspective) established themselves in Europe, later spreading to America and beyond, and so the religious landscape was becoming very diverse indeed.[217] And this is to say nothing of what was happening in the hearts and minds of Europe's non-Christians.

If the medieval Church possessed a 'vast reservoir of magical power', then Reformation iconoclasm ought to have helped clear away magical thinking to a considerable degree.[218] In reality, things were more complicated, as Keith Thomas demonstrates in a now-seminal monograph. The English Reformation was not a persecution; within two or three generations, it became a popular movement.[219] The Protestant reformers were never of one mind, however, while the masses clung to some of their old beliefs even as their houses of worship were literally torn down and their liturgical texts rewritten, for they often found little comfort in the Protestant notion of Providence as an explanation for life's violent upheavals (e.g., famine, epidemics, war, hardship).[220] For its part, the Church had possessed 'its institutional framework, its systematic theology, its moral code and its wide range of social functions.'[221] From this perspective, the Reformation created a yawning gap: the eradication of the confessional, for instance, also meant the disappearance of the 'social services' accessible through private dialogue with a priest; hence, the persistence of pervasive beliefs in supernaturalism and recourse to magic and astrology, especially in times of need. Thus, divination, astrology, and occultism remained vital across all levels of sixteenth and seventeenth-century English society, its practitioners ranging from proverbial old wives to well-respected erudite esoteric thinkers, to say nothing of the enduring belief in the power of prayer, talismans, and relics. Only in the long eighteenth century, thanks to a new kind of science that replaced old superstitions, did magical thinking begin to recede (though this process remains incomplete).[222] Across the channel, in mainland Europe, a similar experience unfolded in the many locales where Protestantism took root.[223] And in Catholic Portugal, ironically, it was via their participation in the Inquisition – otherwise arcane and regressive – that 'Enlightened' physicians and surgeons unseated popular healers and other practitioners of 'superstitions', who were charged with 'magical crimes'.[224]

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[213] Political change in Europe was another factor in the spread of Protestantism; see: Rublack, *Protestant Europe*, 9–12.

[214] Ibid, especially 20–55, 124–43, examines the role of place in shaping the two men's distinct theologies.

[215] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, carefully analyses how the imposition of the new faith (and the lightning-speed dissolution of the monasteries that accompanied it) was slow to gain acceptance and take local root, meeting considerable resistance from English men and women more literate in images than words and who were readily moved by the supernaturalism of ritual that was being washed away by Henry VIII's reforms. See, also: Haigh, 'England'; Palmitessa, 'Bohemia and Poland'.

[216] See, however: Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Europe*, which sees Catholic renewal as necessarily a 'house of many mansions' and takes the view from the periphery (e.g., England, the Netherlands, Poland, Bohemia) rather than the Iberian and Italian core of European Catholicism.

[217] Rublack, *Protestant Europe*, 4.

[218] Thomas, *Religion*, 45.

[219] Ibid, 76, for citation. See, also: Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*.

Much the same picture holds true of south Asia and the wider Islamicate world, too, where even the inhabitants of the most remote places welcomed – and continue to welcome – peddlers selling amulets and talismans.[225] To preview ideas examined in the coming chapters concerning magical thinking and its connection with messianism and sainthood, and their impact on kingly presentation, in turn, we might briefly delve into the Mughal imperial library. This was so full of riches that its contents were repeatedly looted or sold off to raise cash during the difficult decades that began with Nadir Shah's invasion of 1739. Then, in 1858, its remaining contents – some 4700 volumes – were seized as 'prize' (legitimate loot) by the Delhi Prize Agents following the suppression of the Indian Rebellion and sold at auction. Of the total, approximately 1957 volumes of Arabic manuscripts, 1550 in Persian, and 157 in Urdu or other languages found their way to the India Office Library in London, becoming the 'Delhi Collection' now housed in the British Library.[226] Of the Persian manuscripts, a very large number are mystical or magical treatises, signalling the importance of such knowledge and its patronage to the Mughal dynasty and to kingly authority.[227]

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[220] Thomas, *Religion*, 51–150. As for religious material culture, some of the old lingered here, too. And, whatever the Protestant emphasis on 'the Word', this did not do away with the power of images, music, clothing, and things in devotional life so much as create a new Protestant material culture shaped or imbued by Protestant values; see: Rublack, *Protestant Europe*, 211–33.

[221] Thomas, *Religion*, 41–54.

[222] Most recently, see: Hunter, *Decline of Magic*, which examines how science displaced superstition more fully than Thomas' pathbreaking work could manage.

[223] See, for instance: Rublack, *Protestant Europe*, 175–210.

[224] Walker, *Doctors*.

[225] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 134.

[226] https://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/the-delhi-collection (accessed: 14 July 2020).

Venturing beyond the Delhi Collection and the Mughal world, we might pause to examine copies of the *Nujum al-'Ulum*. Their contents were intended to form an encyclopaedic treatment of knowledges on astrology, alchemy, medicine, magic, statecraft, and power.[228] Their author or guiding light is likely to have been none other than 'Ali 'Adil Shah I. By 'engaging with and inserting himself and his sultanate into older astrological, cosmological, and geographical traditions', Emma Flatt argues, he sought to align 'himself and his sultanate with powerful cosmic forces that were thought to act on daily life in the physical world'.[229] In all this, moreover, Indian rulers were not alone: the court astronomer to the English monarch, Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603), was also an occultist and alchemist named John Dee (b. 1527), while the palace built by the Spanish Habsburg emperor, Philip II (r. 1556–98), was home to several laboratories where the king supervised alchemical experiments.[230] Alchemy and the occult were not viewed as 'diversions from rulership', Martyn Rady summarises, but 'were central to it, for the realms of magic and of hidden truth were thought to hold the solution to how the world might be brought into conformity with the cosmic order'.[231] Hence, the engagement of Rudolf II (r. 1576–1612), the central European Habsburg ruler, with the occult text translated from Latin to Czech as the *Tabula Smaragdina* ('The Emerald Tablet').[232]

Magic and religion had always held 'parallel functions', existing in competition yet also frequently interrelated, and this is the key to understanding the persistence of magic long in the wake of the Reformation.[233] Another key to understanding the limits of the Reformation-as-Revolution is to view it in the context of the Renaissance, for part and parcel with the return to ancient wisdoms was the sweeping tide of Neoplatonism – beginning with Florentine writers such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), and then spreading north through the works of Paracelsus (c. 1493–1531) and Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535), to name but a few – that created a general climate for magical thinking and magical activities against which radical Protestant reformers railed.[234] Again, this picture extends beyond Europe to a degree. The currency of Neoplatonic thinking in Iran and south Asia even gives us licence to think of a global 'Neoplatonist Renaissance' extending from the banks of the Thames to the Ganges.[235]

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[227] Ursula Sims-Williams, 'The 'Delhi' Manuscript Collection: A Snapshot View of Intellectual Life in 1857' – unpublished paper presented at 'Beyond Decline: Globalisation and the Transition to Modernity in the Middle East and South Asia, 1600–1914', organised by Gagan Sood and Coskun Tuncer, 19–20 June 2017. Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 345–400, for primary sources concerning the occult sciences in the Mughal, Safavid, and Ottoman worlds.

[228] For a recent analysis and guide to these manuscripts, see: Flatt, '*Nujūm*'. See, also: Hutton, *Bijapur*, 50–69.

[229] Flatt, '*Nujūm*', citation 235. See, also: Flatt, *Living Well*, 210–67.

[230] Rady, *Habsburgs*, 107.

[231] Ibid, 107.

[232] Ibid, 107–15. Moran, 'Courts and Academies', especially 251–63, usefully sets these examples into a wider, pan-European perspective.

[233] Thomas, *Religion*, 633–40, for summary, and *passim*.

The intellectually avant-garde authors of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, for instance, were polymaths with knowledge of theology, metaphysics, and philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and the occult sciences.[236] They were also all connected to Neoplatonic thinking and their *Tarikh* had all the hallmarks of Neoplatonism, being rooted in normative theory known as *akhlaq*, itself moored in the thinking contained in antique Hellenic texts blended with that from the Islamic(ate) world, making it intellectually cosmopolitan, fairly non-sectarian, and thus a useful 'practical philosophy' for Indo-Muslim rulers.[237] The *Tarikh's* authors developed the idea of *sulh-i kull* in the late sixteenth century, which evolved to become the conceptual heart of Mughal political tolerance (§3.3.4).[238] Finally, it bears remembering that even Aurangzeb, who reformulated sovereignty around justice and the law rather than charismatic or supernatural sources of authority, made use of 'magic' when he sent a large army bearing banners and flags emblazoned with scriptural verses and magical figures against the Satnami rebels in 1672. The rebels' leader had proclaimed the power to use spells to conjure an invisible army, so the emperor was not afraid of fighting 'magic with magic'.[239]

2.5.3 An Indian Reformation?

Having cut the Reformation down to size, does a truncated version of the concept retain anything that might help us characterise what has been described in this chapter? Contemporaries, for their part, drew equivalences between Protestantism and Islam. Catholics like Guillaume Postel (1510–81) saw the evil as practically one and the same, whereas for Protestant states, like England, finding common ground with Morocco and the Ottoman Empire was a step toward building an alliance against their mutual Catholic enemies.[240] The Protestantish-ness of Islam should not be confused for a 'Protestant turn' in Islam, however. It was only in the modern era, Francis Robinson argues, that Muslims rejected magic in religious belief and practice, as well as embodied forms of knowledge, in favour of textual exegesis.[241] The Reformation in

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[234] Thomas, *Religion*, 223–31, 267–77.

[235] Gommans, 'Neoplatonic Renaissance', for an excellent guide to a new research area.

[236] Gommans and Husseini, 'Neoplatonism', 874.

[237] Ibid, 875–81. On *akhlaq*, its place in the Mughal state, and where it met its limits, see: Alam, *Languages*, 11–15, 46–80, 141–51.

[238] Gommans and Husseini, 'Neoplatonism', 881–86.

[239] Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 333.

[240] See: Fleischer, 'Mediterranean Apocalypse', which surveys Postel's career and thought; Brotton, *This Orient Isle*, for a nuanced discussion of the Elizabethans' attitudes to Islam.

[241] Marshall G.S. Hodgson, by contrast, saw more similarity between the turn to Shiʿism in Safavid Iran and the Protestant Reformation: *Venture*, 33–34.

Europe had peculiar dynamics because the religious orthodoxy existed in concrete institutions that formed the locus of the reformers' opposition and because print technology facilitated the dissemination of the new creeds. By contrast, there was no counterpart to the Papacy and the Catholic Church even in the worlds of Brahmanical Hinduism or Islam. As for the printing press, which played such a vital part in Martin Luther's challenge of Church orthodoxy and the spread of the Protestant creed, it did not make its appearance in south Asia for some centuries. Once printing finally made inroads into south Asia and the wider Muslim world in the nineteenth century, there was quickly a much greater and deeper scripturalism, changing Muslim life, learning, and consciousness, meanwhile diminishing some of the authority possessed by the *ulama*, which constituted the Muslim Reformation according to Robinson.[242]

While this may be so, our subtler understanding of the pace of social change during the Reformation and in its aftermath forces us to fine-tune the weight placed on print technology as a means of spreading Protestant theology. We should not forget that print had a greater impact in European (and colonial) towns than the countryside, and that levels of textual literacy were higher than in south Asia but not widespread, especially among girls and women.[243] We also should not so hastily assume that the production and dissemination of knowledge in the form of manuscripts and via forms of orality was necessarily an obstacle to a new textualism in the Indo-Islamicate world, nor overlook the extent to which radical new messages flourished even without print in south Asia (§10.1). There were other points of conjuncture, besides. These include: anti-clericalism and the railing against ritualism; evangelicalism and intensive proselytisation; the intertwining of devotionalism with wider social and political movements; the institutionalisation of 'protest' in new orders and their institutions; an increasingly competitive religious marketplace, made all the more so by sectarian divisions and the strife to establish orthodoxies; and the appeal of dynasts to the legitimating power of religious communities.

'If the distinction between magic and religion had been blurred by the medieval Church', early Protestantism sought to deny 'the magic of the *opus operatum*', much as the *bhagats* railed against the ritualism of Brahmanical Hinduism and Sufi Islam.[244] Nanak's rejection of Hindu and Muslim ritualism and of such beliefs as the ritual uncleanliness of women is strikingly similar to radical Protestant reformers' attacks on such practices as 'churching' women after childbirth (often involving shutting women up indoors for a period of time and temporarily discharging them of sexual obligations to their husbands). Nanak's thought can also be linked to the Protestant reformers' scepticism concerning the supernaturalism – and popular superstition surrounding – saintly intercessors and religious rituals

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[242] Robinson, *Muslim History*, 66–121.

[243] Capp, 'Gender and Family', 27.

[244] Thomas, *Religion*, citations 51 and 52, respectively.

(even where these were ‘parasitic’ beliefs, from the Church’s perspective).[245] Given the persistence of magical thinking, however, it is as ironic as it was inevitable that the Reformation crisis (re)created martyrs and saints in Europe, much as the execution of Sikh gurus amidst Mughal-Sikh hostilities was the genesis of the Sikh martyrdom tradition, not to mention anything of those saintly idioms also inflecting Sikh devotionalism and the *panth* of the Sikh gurus.[246]

We can also find conjuncture in the *limits* or *resistance* to religious change. The enduring popularity of anti-caste movements should not lead us to believe all were persuaded, much as, say, many English villagers saw no reason to do away with the Catholic Church during – and were resistant to – the Reformation. By the same turn, Brahmanical religion not only cannibalised Bhakti and Sant movements and left its mark on Sikhism, but was perhaps *allowed* to do so by willing and receptive individuals or groups.[247] But there were major differences, too; the state’s greater permissiveness in early modern India was possibly the overarching one.

Having outlined some of the major developments in faith and belief in the early modern period, their roots often reaching into the *longue durée*, this chapter frames subsequent forays into where and how people lived and how their lives were organised in the period from the fifteenth century, how they navigated confessional and community differences, their relationship to political and religious centres, the contexts of knowledge and cultural production, and so forth. However, in another sense, the remainder of this book might be taken as an attempt to make sense of ecstatic upheaval or of the enduring hunger for talismans, miracles, and holy cures, for benedictions and saintly intercessions – to make sense, that is, of the remarkable endurance of the enchanted world and magical thinking outlined in this chapter. There was a bridge linking early modernity to what came before, and this explains why it was *possible* to carry over old beliefs into a new world, but some part of why it was *desirable* or *necessary* must rest in the upheavals particular to the times. The continuation of a trend toward concentrating populations in towns; the spread and growing power of centralised states and of capitalism and their (conjoint?) offensive against established lifeways; climate crises, dynastic overthrow, and the appearance variously of messiahs and of foreigners from faraway lands; the opportunities and challenges posed by new kinds of learning… these were all sources of the dynamism of early modern times yet also precisely what contemporaries found unsettling. Such themes are our concern in the remaining chapters of this book.

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[245] Thomas, *Religion*, 38, 46–50, 60. *C.f.* Wooding, *Tudor England*, 135, for a woman-centred interpretation of churching.

[246] Gregory, ‘Martrys’, for a summary.

[247] Wooding, *Tudor England*, 87–119.

3 Ideology

Born in 1616, Saiyid Zulfiqar al-Husaini was a Zoroastrian traveller who had visited Kashmir and parts of Afghanistan, Hindustan, and Odisha by 1652. He was well-placed enough to have met and conversed not only with Mughal officials and writers, but also a diverse range of religious figures, including Guru Hargobind, Chidrup Gosain, and Sarmad (a famous Sufi *qalandar*), as well as numerous Catholic priests, Tibetan lamas, Brahmans, *sannyasis*, and *bairagis*.[1] Under a *nom-de-plume*, Mubad Shah, he penned the *Dabistan-i Mazahib* ('The School of Religions'). It was a new kind of text, differing from works on Indian religions extant in the Islamicate world that largely repeated received wisdom. Instead, Mubad Shah turned his interviews with holy men encountered during his travels and his new readings of scripture into a wholly new analysis, at once encyclopaedic and comparative. Indic religions were tackled in the first chapter, followed by chapters on Tibetans, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, with the final two on the Roshaniya and the Ilahiya, with forays into particular sub-sects found within each of these chapters.

The discussion on the Ilahiya concerned the followers of the *din-i ilahi* (divine religion) and its establishment by the Mughal emperor, Akbar (Fig. 3A, left). Akbar's *din* or religion had already long ceased to exist by the time of Mubad Shah's birth, but it was, significantly, the product of a series of dialogues with learned men representing various religious communities invited by the emperor himself. His successor, Jahangir (Fig. 3A, right), organised nightly sessions in the early years of his reign – from 1608 to 1611 – where he likewise discoursed with Brahman pandits, Sunni jurists, Jesuit *padres*, and even Jewish savants, the fruits of which formed the basis of an only very recently discovered handbook intended for his disciples – the *Majalis-i Jahangiri* ('Assemblies of Jahangir').[2] Such conversations had something in common with Mubad Shah's interviews, therefore, much as each of these men organised their

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[1] This brief sketch is drawn from Behl, 'Book of Religions'.

[2] See: Lefèvre, 'Messianism, Rationalism'. The citation comes from *op. cit.*, 319. Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 55–75, for translated portions of the *Majalis*. For a Jesuit account of the Mughals from the third mission to the court (with a useful contextual and critical introduction): Flores, *Jesuit Treatise*.

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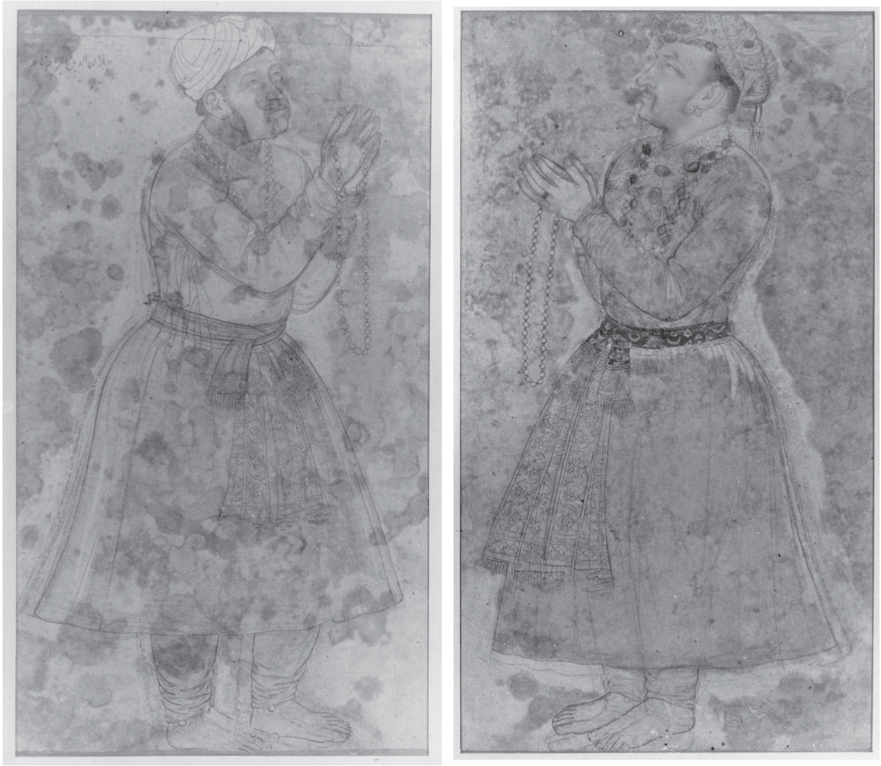

Fig. 3A Facing Portraits of Akbar (left) and Jahangir (right) Praying (ink and watercolour; Mughal artist; c. 1605)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 29.160.19 and 29.160.20

understanding and reconciliation of religious difference through the frames of their own cosmologies (Sunni Islam and Zoroastrianism). 'Mubad Shah's strategies of distinction – naming, describing, classifying, judging, translating, and polemicising – are found in a range of contemporary materials', Aditya Behl argues, 'that also try to construct what [is] around them into an orderly universe.'[3] This meant a tension lay at the heart of such ecumenicalism, the implications of which are examined toward the end of this chapter in connection with Akbar's *din*.

Thousands of miles away in Amsterdam, a seven-volume work running to more than 3,000 pages and containing 250 plates was published under the title *Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses de Tous les Peuples du Monde* ('Religious Ceremonies and Customs of All the Peoples of the World'). It was the work of the famous engraver, Bernard Picart, and the author and publisher, Jean Frederic Bernard. Its volumes opened with Judaism and Catholicism, before panning from the Americas to Africa via India, and only then 'to return to the familiar, to the many forms of Protestantism, before finally tackling Islam'.[4] It was a product of the Reformation (§2.5.2), animated by the Protestant view of idolatry and the attribution of corporeal forms and human frailties to the divine as a departure from true faith, but its advent has recently been described as marking 'a major turning point in European attitudes toward religious belief and hence the sacred' because it 'sowed the radical idea that religions could be compared on equal terms, and therefore that all religions were equally worthy of respect – and criticism.'[5] This might be so, and Picart and Bernard's work is monumental in scale and achievement, but it ought to be remembered that their first volume only made its appearance in 1723 – many decades, in other words, after Mubad Shah's *Dabistan-i Mazahib* (a literary prototype waiting to be discovered) and approximately a century and a half after Akbar's inauguration of the *din-i ilahi* (a radical experiment in religious syncretism). These facts place Picart and Bernard's undertaking, as Rajiv Kinra puts it, 'in a much broader context of global early modernity, one in which Europe and Europeans have no exclusive claim to the types of cultural tolerance, civility, and humanism necessary for such a work even to be produced.'[6]

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[3] Behl, 'Book of Religions', 233.

As we shall see in this chapter, 'handling diversity with absolute civility could be – and clearly was – a Muslim value, too.'[7] Before we proceed, however, it is worth pausing to reflect upon the very *different* religious landscapes of south Asia compared to Europe or even the Ottoman Empire, for these differences have vital implications for the nature and the very need for religious toleration. Because there was no Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh religious establishment quite like the Catholic Church, or even the kind of national church established by Henry VIII in England, the relationship of the state to religious authority looked rather different in south Asia compared to Europe. At the same time, early modern India was highly multi-confessional; new religious movements and sectarian division intensified competition in the religious marketplace through the period, but this confessionalisation did not lead to the increasing suspicion and animosity toward religious 'others' witnessed in (Counter-)Reformation Europe.[8] As for India's rulers, they seldom sought to make their personal faith into the religion of the realm, particularly Muslim sovereigns whose rule extended over a majority non-Muslim population. To preview arguments made in Chapter 7, we might best view the Mughal state not as strong and hegemonic, but as forged in a mutual alliance between the ruler and his subjects, necessitating the centre's on-going bargaining with those numerous social elements who held the power to uphold or contest lordship. This goes some way to explaining, on the one hand, the state's very limited interference in the religious lives of its subjects, and, on the other, the state's lavish support of religious groups through the endowment of tax-free lands as well as more direct patronage of the kinds seen in the previous chapter.

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[4] Hunt *et al*, *Book That Changed Europe*, 1.

[5] Ibid, 1, for citation, and 211–46, for Bernard and Picart's treatment of idolatry and of Indian religions.

[6] Kinra, 'Handling Diversity', 289.

[7] Ibid, 289.

[8] Tolerance is a state of mind which, in the European context, arguably only emerged during the Enlightenment and is a modern attitude, therefore. Toleration, by contrast, is a social practice – and one with a bumpy history in early modern Europe, much more so than in south Asia, it seems. Marshall, 'Religious Culture', offers a useful summary drawing on Benjamin Kaplan's important work. Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 109–53, presents the Ottoman Empire as somewhere betwixt Europe and south Asia.

To be sure, we can discern a concern among south Asia's rulers for heresy and apostasy from time to time, as examples in what follows stand to show, yet these were of a different order to those of their Ottoman and Safavid counterparts and quite apart from Charles V's proclamations of holy war and his edicts against heresy.[9] The state did not seek to restrict religious life or freedom of conscience as it variously did in France and England, and the concept of 'dissenting belief' holds none of the usefulness that it does in the European context.[10] There were consequently no protracted Wars of Religion or anything like Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563), nor were there great emigrations of 'dissenters' to other kingdoms where they could practice their faith (more) freely, as the Huguenots were compelled to do.[11] There also does not seem to have been a politically charged and popular *Beeldenstorm* or 'Iconoclastic Fury' of the kind witnessed in Antwerp, for instance, in 1566 and in 1581.[12] Magical thinking endured, but there was nothing like the popular irrationality that manifested as the persecution, prosecution, and punishment of alleged witches, which seized the early moderns from the Old World to New England, or even the 'soulstealing' and sorcery epidemic that terrorised late eighteenth-century China.[13] More importantly, there was nothing like the irrationality of the Inquisition. That institution not only represented an assault on freedom of conscience, the centrepieces of which were ritualised displays of the sentenced and the executions of the unrepentant at *autos-de-fé* that contributed to more than a mere atmosphere of fear and persecution. The Inquisition also (and necessarily) resulted in an attack on certain knowledges and learning, and consequently curtailed the circulation of ideas across the Iberian world.[14]

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[9] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 32–54, for primary sources.

[10] Kaplan, 'Coexistence'.

[11] See, for instance: Hunt *et al*, *Book That Changed Europe*, 71–111.

[12] Pye, *Antwerp*, 183–90.

[13] On the witch craze, most recently: Gaskill, *Ruin*. Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, examines how mid-Qing society was whipped into a frenzy by a sorcery scare.

[14] It bears noting, however, that the Inquisition resulted in fewer executions than the wars associated with the Reformation. For a recent, thoroughgoing treatment, see: Bethencourt, *Inquisition*.

Across the world, the early moderns' piety and devotional observances were neither the property of individuals nor carried on in private, which is a modern view of belief, so much as they had a vital social and, often, political character.[15] This chapter is about the relationship of faith communities to the state and politics (ideology), focusing on three broad areas: whether (or not) empires played much role in mass conversion; what contribution Indo-Muslim states made to religious conflict (if any); and how we might read the Mughals' (changing) conciliation with their non-Muslim subjects. The historiography relating to each of these topics, and thus on early modern India as a whole, has been tainted by Hindu and Muslim communalism and the Hindu-Muslim conflict of modern times in ways that has frequently polarised discussion.[16] Without trying to falsely paint an overly rosy portrait of pre-colonial India, comparison reveals that India was a world apart from Europe and the Americas, where the forces unleashed by the Inquisition and the Reformation – and their interaction with a pivotal phase of state formation and empire building, in turn – lay at the heart of religious change, societal upheaval, and political conflict and bloodshed on a far greater order of magnitude.

3.1 Empires and Conversion

To say that the Indian subcontinent is home to a majority Hindu population is too simplistic. In the first place, as we have seen, Hinduism is really a modern construct, serving as an umbrella term for a vast array of beliefs and practices. Hinduism is frequently elided with Brahmanical religion, not least because of the latter's spreading and cannibalising folk beliefs in a very long-run process (§2.1.1), which was in turn contested by poet-saints such as Kabir and continues to be contested to this day (§2.4.1). The other side of the coin, finally, is the minority of the population who were not 'Hindu' yet whose number runs into many millions – a minority in proportional terms but hardly insignificant in absolute size. This minority was (and is still) constituted of people who might be identified as Jains, Jews, Christians, and Muslims. India's earliest Muslim and Christian populations were largely to be found in coastal settlements and their presence – either as short-term migrants or as settlers – was linked to Indian Ocean trade.

Our present concern is with the growth of Muslim and Christian populations in south Asia, which some have clumsily linked to 'foreign' imperialisms.[17] Before proceeding, it is worth stating that imperialism was neither inherently 'foreign' to India, nor did Brahmanical religion and sects abjure the benefits of imperial patronage. Quite the contrary, in fact, as one example stands to show. The early Vijayanagra dynasties were Shaivite and supported not only Shaiva

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[15] See: Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 167.

[16] Alam, 'Competition'. See, also: Metcalf, 'Reflections'.

[17] See: Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia*, 9–11, for a critical discussion of recent communalist projects rewriting history in this direction.

(and Vaishnava) temples, but also Shaiva monasteries (*maths*). These monasteries formed a growing web, so that the court's (economic, political, symbolic) patronage supported the articulation and spread of sectarian ideas into virgin territory, while the relationships built by scholar-monks with a variety of social groups on the ground helped expand the economic and social networks of the Vijayanagara Empire far from its centre.[18] This provides a clear parallel to the spread of Sufi Islam described in what follows.

3.1.1 Islam

Islam began its spread from Arabia to the Indian Ocean world not long after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632). It was blown there on the monsoon winds, for the agents of its spread to the shores and coastal communities of east Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and southeast Asia were merchants, not sultans or holy warriors – what Sebastian Prange calls 'Monsoon Islam'.[19] Roughly corresponding to the present-day Indian state of Kerala, Malabar was an important site in the world of Monsoon Islam (Map 3A). Malabar was distinctive: from the twelfth century, it was neither ruled by the ancient Hindu-Tamil dynasties of south India nor absorbed by the expansionist Muslim Turko-Persian conquest states in north India, instead fragmenting into a few competing states, their major ports being Mangalore, Cannanore, Calicut, Cochin, and Kollam. The development of Hindu beliefs was consequently idiosyncratic, especially when compared to other parts of India, as was Islam. Indeed, as Stephen F. Dale and Sebastian Prange note, Malabar is different from other parts of Muslim India both in terms of language (for Arabic, rather than Persian, serves as the *lingua franca* of Muslim elites) and religious affiliation (with the preeminent school of Islamic law being the Shafiʿi, not the Hanafi school linked to India's Turko-Mongol dynasties).[20] Malabar Muslims were known as Mappilas – a broad catch-all term yet one used to distinguish autochthonous Muslims from foreign (*paradesi*) Muslims residing in coastal settlements.[21]

Once planted on India's littoral, Islam revolved around the twin institutions and spaces of the mosque and the office of the *qazi* or magistrate (§7.3.3), spreading along the shoreline as new mosques were built and community guardians settled in other ports.[22] In such settlements, the growth of Mappila communities was the result of intermarriage and the raising of a new generation as Muslims, the conversion of (mainly low-caste) Hindus, and a slave population (mostly from east Africa; §5.2.2). The result was that Islam was highly acculturated to local beliefs and practices, many of which were retained.[23]

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[18] Stoker, 'South India'.

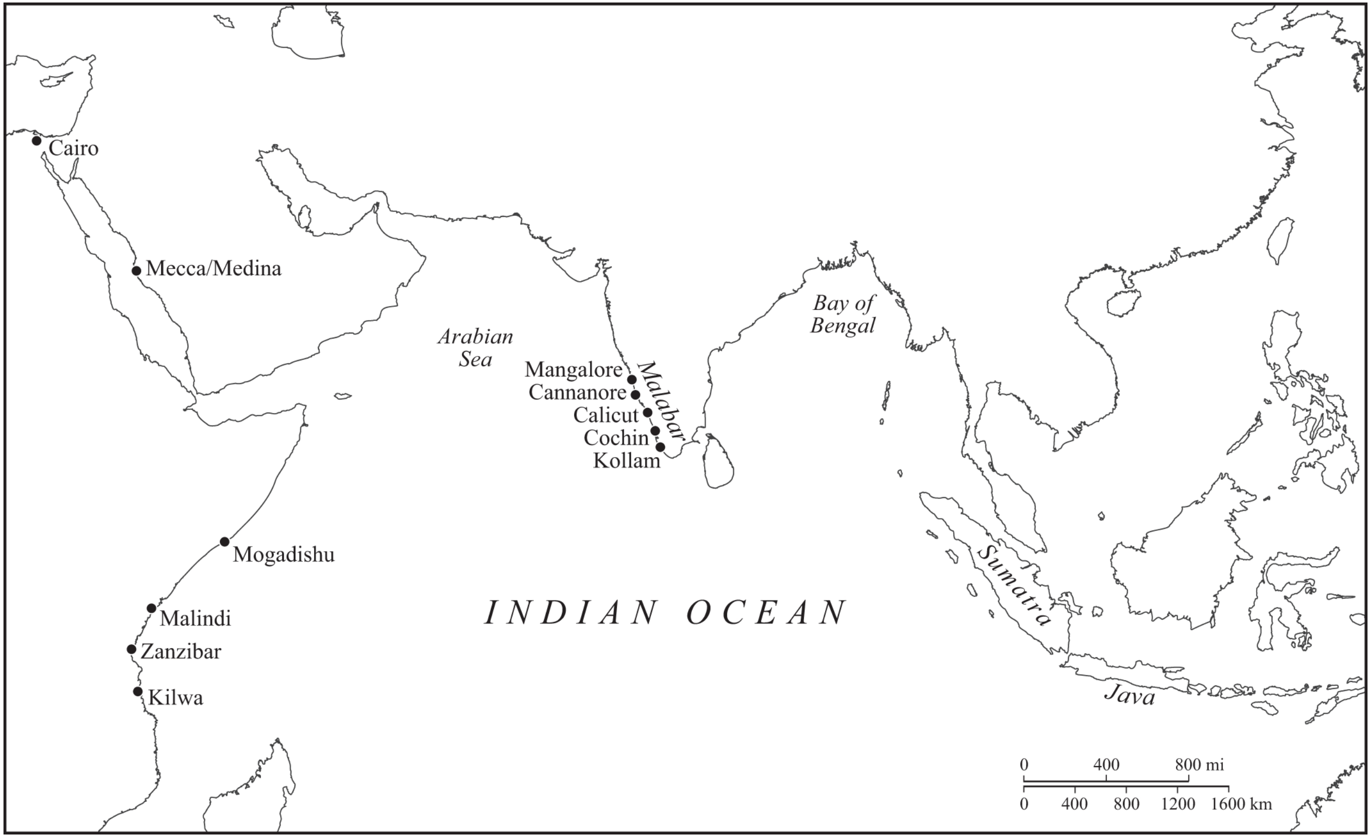
[19] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, especially 2–7, 48–58, and *passim*.

[20] Dale, *Islamic Frontier*, 24–26; Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 14.

[21] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 51–58.

[22] Ibid, 92–157.

[23] Ibid, 169–82.


Cairo
Mecca/Medina
Arabian Sea
Mangalore
Cannanore
Calicut
Cochin
Kollam
Malabar
Bay of Bengal
Mogadishu
Malindi
Zanzibar
Kilwa
INDIAN OCEAN
Sumatra
Java
0 400 800 mi
0 400 800 1200 1600 km

Map 3A The World of 'Monsoon Islam'

Outsiders to the social and political order, which was dominated by a Brahman oligarchy and Hindu kings, Muslims were nonetheless vital to the local economy because of their participation in trade – and that is why Malabar's rulers did not thwart the growth of Mappila communities.[24] Monsoon Islam was, Prange argues, 'an interstitial phenomenon that developed most dynamically in the context of weak states, whose rulers were rivals to one another but who shared in a wary suspicion of the great landed empires.' Malabar's rulers included the Zamorins of Calicut, who were, in this context, dependent on trade and thus on Muslims; the title 'Zamorin' is believed to be a corruption of *samudri raja* (lord of the sea).[25] It was 'only where rulers saw it in their own interest to provide and safeguard' the physical and ideological spaces inhabited by Muslims that 'Monsoon Islam could take hold – and it was only rulers with a clear stake in the fortunes of maritime trade who made this calculation.'[26]

Mappilas had close ties to Muslim communities in monsoon Asia's key ports – including Java and Sumatra, where Islam had spread by the dawn of the early modern period – for Indian Ocean coastal settlements were nodes of trade as well as cultural and intellectual exchange.[27] Critical agents of these exchanges were Islamic scholars, Sufis, and then laymen later on. The vectors included literary texts – 'the Quran above all, but also hagiography, poetry, jurisprudence, scientific writing and more,' which 'were the bearers of the new religion and way of life both in Arabic or in vernacular translation', Ronit Ricci demonstrates.[28] Conversion of local peoples and the larger process of what has been called 'Islamisation', moreover, was an outcome of the process of translation of Arabic-language Islamic texts, for this acculturated Islam to local contexts in southeast Asia.[29] Indonesia is one of Islam's success stories, on account of its vast Muslim population, thanks, in part, to these networks and processes in early modern times.[30] Islamisation in south Asia was no less momentous, but the Mappila community remained small and concentrated on the coast until well into the colonial period, and Malabar Islam was idiosyncratic compared to Muslim south Asia at large, as already noted.

Thus, we must look elsewhere to understand large-scale conversion; namely, those locales coterminous with the succession of Indo-Muslim states established from medieval times. Generally, they originated in, and maintained links with, the Turko-Persianate world – rather than the Arab world just described – a further impact of which was to make south Asian Islam even more variegated and complex than the monolith some might imagine. As they were ruled by Muslims who hailed from beyond the Indus, these states have been the subject of colonial and communalist writers' ire. An implication of such writers' representation of Indo-Muslim states as a form of 'foreign' imperialism is to see Islam itself as 'alien'; this is not only problematic but also inaccurate, for reasons we shall see. Another implication is to link these 'foreign' imperialisms to the spread of an 'alien' religion and thereby explain the growth in Muslim populations within India.[31]

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[24] *C.f.* Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 71–103, which examines the embeddedness of Muslim saints in south Indian states and societies.

[25] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 182–206.

[26] Ibid, 160.

[27] Ibid, 207–78; Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 5–11, which describes the spread of Islam to these locales.

[28] Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 1.

[29] Ibid.

[30] For more on Islam's spread in and around the Bay of Bengal and to the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, see: Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 116–23.

In Europe, such a phenomenon as the conversion of Jews and Muslims following the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition (1478), the *Reconquista* of Spain (1492), and the expulsion of non-Christians, might be explained in terms of voluntary conversion under extreme duress.[32] Yet, as Richard M. Eaton demonstrates so persuasively, one cannot convincingly explain the growing number of Muslim believers in south Asia as the outcome of forced conversion under the aegis of Muslim states, or as a voluntary act in pursuit of the patronage of Muslim rulers and elites, or even as a quest for salvation by those pushed out of Hindu society by the prejudice and poverty they had to suffer on account of their caste.[33] These ideas can explain particular localised cases; it is more of a struggle to fit them to the emergence of large and widespread populations of Muslim believers.[34] The greatest concentrations of Muslims were to be found on the fringes of Indo-Muslim states – namely, in western Punjab and eastern Bengal, which are roughly coterminous with the modern states of Pakistan and Bangladesh, respectively.

Bengal provides a key to better understanding the spread of Islam in south Asia. In the early thirteenth century, Turkish armies advanced across north India and, by 1204, had conquered the northwestern part of Bengal. This movement of the 'political frontier' of Muslim power did not entail the conversion of the local non-Muslim population to Islam, however. Bengal had been ruled by Muslims for several centuries prior to the Mughal conquest of the Bengal Sultanate's capital in 1574 (Map 3B), yet it seems that widespread conversion to Islam had not taken place. The relatively small number of Muslims in Bengal were largely *ashrafs* – that is, urbanised and often immigrant elites – rather than belonging to the rural masses. A few decades later, however, Muslim believers were recorded in the countryside for the first time, and in large numbers. This fact is all the more surprising since the Mughal dynasty 'as a matter of policy showed no interest in proselytising on behalf of the Islamic faith'.[35]

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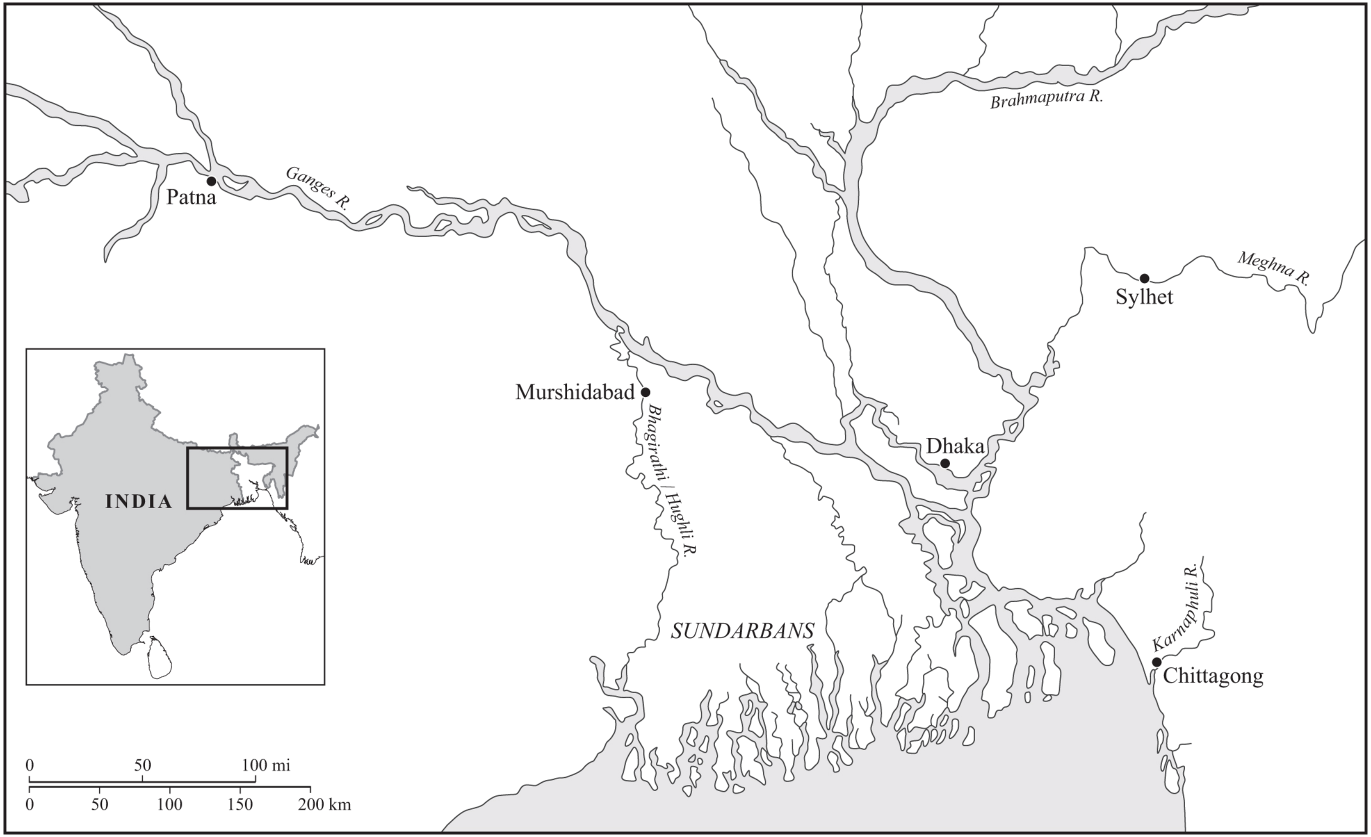
[31] Eaton, 'Introduction' [2], 9–14.

[32] Bethencourt, *Inquisition*.

[33] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 113–34.

[34] For the conversion of *elite* Rajputs to Islam during the Mughal era, see Sreenivasan, 'Faith and Allegiance'.

[35] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 134.


Brahmaputra R.
Patna
Ganges R.
Meghna R.
Sylhet
Murshidabad
Bhagirathi / Hughli R.
Dhaka
INDIA
SUNDARBANS
Karnaphuli R.
Chittagong
0
50
100 mi
0
50
100
150
200 km

Map 3B Mughal Bengal

Because they lived, moreover, in the east of the province in what had been a forested and marshy hinterland in 1204 and remained so for centuries thereafter, some additional context is useful. Brahmanisation had progressed considerably in west Bengal where indigenes had also hitherto been fully yoked to the plough and, therefore, the fiscal system of centralised states.[36] In east Bengal, however, neither Brahmanisation nor settled agriculture had advanced very far. What changed upon the Mughal conquest was not the advance of Muslim armies deeper into Bengal where they wielded the sword and forced local populations to convert. Rather, it was the presence of those Sufi *pirs* accompanying the Mughals and their penetration of the forested interior that proved pivotal. They won over both the local population and local potentates – earning the latter's patronage – through the performance of miracles that demonstrated their supernatural powers (by offering protection from tigers and the untamed forests, for example). Their charisma and otherworldly power earned them considerable followings – sometimes thousands of men strong – whose devotion meant Sufi *shaikhs* were valuable to the Mughals and other rulers as a source of military manpower (§6.1).

In other words, society in east Bengal was open and receptive to the initiative of powerful *shaikhs*. Their initiative extended to the pushing outward of the agrarian frontier and the knitting of the local economy into the imperial economy and the even larger, regional economy. Key to this was the spread of wet rice cultivation, principally in the east, which had progressed to such an extent that Bengal started producing vast surpluses and exporting its grain across India and the Indian Ocean world.[37]

Critical to all this were the *shaikhs*. With the manpower under their command, they were able to clear forest and turn it over to wet-rice cultivation, at the same time settling the land and using the rich proceeds from it to support the community around the mosque. By winning over local rulers, and given their links to the imperial centre, they were able to construct mosques and received the support of the state to this end. Bengali sources speak of 'a model of patronage – a mosque linked economically with the hinterland and politically with the state – that was fundamental to the expansion of Muslim agrarian civilisation throughout the delta.'[38] In time, *pirs* or their descendants transformed religious charisma into landholding rights: the Mughal state awarded tax-free lands to the trustees of mosques and shrines, guaranteeing that their heirs would continue to enjoy such rights.[39] Upon effectively becoming petty landholders, they also engendered Bengal's 'religious gentry', and thereby helped establish Islamic institutions in rural Bengal.[40]

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[36] Ibid, 184–93.

[37] Ibid, 194–207.

[38] Ibid, 218.

[39] Ibid, 238.

[40] Ibid, 219, for citation, 194–267, for analysis.

Just as the Mughal state pursued its own political objectives by forming the recipients of these grants into a dependent clientele (i.e., the gentry), so the latter 'had already formed dependent clienteles of their own.'[41] Pioneer *shaikhs* transformed forest into arable and – with the support of the Mughal state and the force of their charisma – they formed village communities.[42] They brought Islam into the lives of local people, but the new 'Islamic institutions proved sufficiently flexible to accommodate the non-Brahmanised religious culture of premodern Bengal', while indigenes likewise 'made accommodations with the amalgam of rites, rituals, and beliefs that were associated with the village mosques and shrines then proliferating in their midst'.[43] Indigenes first included *shaikhs* and saints possessed with supernatural powers alongside the deities they worshipped (e.g., Chandi/Durga), then elided or absorbed Islam within their older cosmologies and culture, turning Islam into something Bengali in the process.[44] 'Conversion' does not adequately capture such a process, therefore, even if formerly non-Muslim peoples came to adopt a sort of Islam.[45] Conquest by a Muslim imperial power, moreover, was insufficient to usher in religious change; it was a complex interaction of the moving political, agrarian, and Islamic frontiers in tandem – and in a context of economic growth and a region little touched by Brahmanical Hinduism – that explains why Islam flourished in east Bengal.

Can we generalise from east Bengal's experience? In the first place, we might fruitfully compare it to Kashmir, where the tensions between Brahmans and non-Brahmans were expressed in the anti-Brahman poetry of Lalla Ded, a fourteenth-century *yogini*, in turn nourishing the Rishis, a popular and growing local ascetic movement that was eventually transformed into a Sufi order.[46] Secondly, the east Bengal example shows how the local came to be knitted into the processes of commercialisation and globalisation. These were not new processes yet, after about c. 1500, were attaining a scale and intensity that produced novel – often distinctively 'early modern' – outcomes. This idea is examined extensively in the following chapters, except to note the similarity with western Java, where 'Islam grew in tandem with deforestation, agrarian expansion, and the establishment of small mosques on lands granted by the state' between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.[47] 'Early on', as Karen Barkey notes, Sufis likewise 'played a major role in the colonisation of territory and in the conversion of Christians to a mild heterodox Islam' following Ottoman conquests in places like the Balkans, though the economic motivations differed in a landscape that was already under the plough.[48]

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[41] Ibid, 247.

[42] This process had its limits; namely, where people retreated further into the forest, so that non-Muslim, non-Bengali identities survived until relatively recently. See: van Schendel, *Bangladesh*, 32.

[43] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 267.

[44] Ibid, 270–303, for analysis more complex than can be adequately summarised here. This is, of course, only one side of the story; namely, that concerning those indigenes who moved toward Sufi Islam. The relationship to Islam and Mughal rule of those worshippers of Chandi/Durga who did not absorb or acquiesce to Sufism have been revealed by Kumkum Chatterjee through a rich study of Bengali literature. Initially, the Mughal regime was presented as a monster that the goddess had to vanquish. With the passage of time and regularisation of Mughal rule, there was a shift toward presenting the Mughals and their successors as having capitulated to – and become devotees of – Chandi/Durga. See: Chatterjee, 'Goddess Encounters', especially 1449–63.

[45] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 269.

[46] Khan, 'Kashmir'.

Eaton's case study forces us, finally, to rethink the very process of conversion and the role played by 'foreign imperialism', and thereby re-evaluate those colonial-era and communalist interpretations that remain entrenched in the historiography. In some respects, the creation of a Muslim community in Gujarat sits somewhere between the Malabar and Bengal examples (and shows some similarity to Ottoman Anatolia).[49] It depended on successive waves of migration by pastoral groups or else those linked to Indian Ocean trade (Monsoon Islam); on the (re)settlement of Islamic scholars and sheikhs from other parts of India or the Islamic world; and on proselytization by Sufis and the establishment of their communities of converts in the region, some of which preceded and some of which followed on the heels of conquest by the Tughluq armies and under their successors, the sultans of Gujarat.[50] Yet, in other respects, the history of Islam in east Bengal is as distinctive as it is in Malabar; key in this regard is its rural setting and its corrective to the view of Islam as an urban religion.

3.1.2 Christianity

Christianity has an even older history in south Asia than Islam, for Christians are thought to have settled on India's western coast between the first and fourth centuries, and they, too, were brought on the monsoon currents blowing across the western Indian Ocean.[51] Known as 'Syrian' Christians, they are so-named because they are thought to descend from west Asian ancestors and use Syriac as a liturgical language. They can hardly be called outsiders, certainly not by the early modern period, for they were well-embedded into local society. The population of Syrian Christians was small yet significant, some were wealthy and linked to trade and commerce, while others formed powerful martial groups. They were rewarded for service to Kerala's rulers with grants of land and office but also reflected their social standing by acting as donors or sponsors of Hindu shrines and temple festivals. They also had devotional cults around shrines and saints that resembled those of Hindus and Muslims, which troubled Iberian Catholics.[52]

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[47] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 313. See, also: Johns, 'Sufism in Southeast Asia'. *C.f.* Ricci, *Islam Translated*, especially 66–150, 183–215.

[48] Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 125–28, which also notes the prevalence of official policy of forced conversion in some regions.

[49] Ibid, 126–27.

[50] Sheikh, *Forging,* 129–64; Balachandran, *Narrative Pasts*, especially 35–62.

[51] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 37.

The 'discovery' (§10.4) by Cristoforo Colombo of the New World in 1492 and by Vasco da Gama of a direct maritime route via the Cape of Good Hope to Asia in 1498 paved the way for the spread of Spain and Portugal's empires into Africa, the Americas, and Asia. The Iberian kingdoms were Catholic powers and the division of the world beyond Europe between them was sanctioned by the Pope. They established (fortified) settlements after securing rights to land from local rulers on which to do so, and these often contained places of worship. There has consequently been a church in Kochi (Cochin) since 1503 – just a few years after da Gama's landing – with the simple wooden structure replaced in 1516 by the building that stands today (Fig. 3B). But what exactly was the relationship of Portuguese imperialism and Catholic *evangelism* in Asia? And what success did they have with conversion?

On the one hand, the Syrian Christians' faith and social standing made them valuable to the Portuguese as the latter sought to build a presence in Asia in pursuit of their commercial and ideological objectives – that is, spices and souls. On the other hand, the Syrian Christians' active links to west Asian patriarchates (i.e., the Nestorian Church) threatened the monopoly of authority over Christian communities the Portuguese state believed it had been granted by the Papacy, which it sought to effect by installing its own priests. Eventually, those Syrian Christians who were convinced to be *pro* Latinisation were converted from Nestorian to Roman Catholic allegiance and exhorted to abjure all un-Catholic doctrines and observances.[53]

Where any kind of Christian population did not yet exist, however, wholly different strategies would be necessary to effect conversion. Once the Portuguese had established settlements – at Goa, for example – they sought to impose a religious monopoly through such means as judicial discrimination of non-Catholic residents (e.g., escheat when Hindus died without male heirs). Over time, especially from about the 1540s, such inducements to conversion 'were replaced by more coercive measures, including a systematic campaign to destroy the temples of the region.'[54] It should be noted that the use of coercion in Brazil was harsher still, involving enslavement. In spite of Portugal's responsibility for the spread of Catholicism made incumbent by agreements struck with the Papacy, there had been little actual progress in effecting conversion – only significant resistance.[55]

Among the 'successes', however, was the conversion of south Indian fisherfolk of the Parava caste. They actively sought Portuguese aid against the incursions of Muslim fisherfolk into waters in which the Paravas had long possessed rights. This occurred in a context in which such groups had

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[52] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 243–57.

[53] Ibid, 257–68.

[54] Chakravarti, *Apostles*, 47, for citation, and 44–52.

[55] Ibid, 178–88.

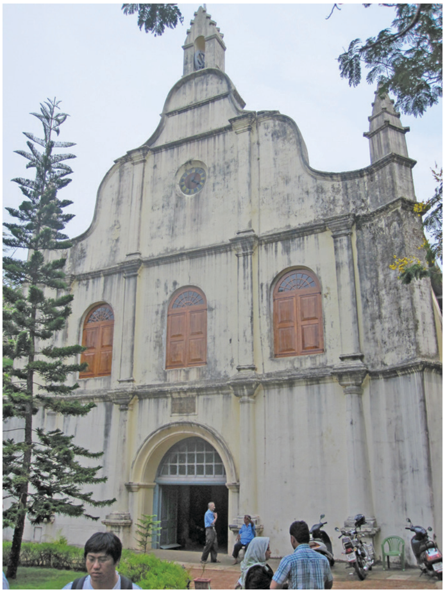

Fig. 3B St Francis' Church, Kochi

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

competed for the patronage of local rulers: some Paravas had previously been drawn into state patronage networks and it was natural, therefore, to seek to become Portuguese clients when the opportunity arose in the 1530s. There followed 'great ceremonies of mass baptism' which, Susan Bayly has argued, 'were really declarations of tactical alliance rather than religious conversions as the term is usually understood.'[56] The veracity of their Catholic faith is doubtable: the first Jesuit missionary to arrive in Asia, Francis Xavier (1506–52), found it necessary to re-convert some 15,000 locals in the 1540s, while nineteenth-century Jesuits lamented the Paravas' having failed to renounce practices of worship drawn from the broader religious landscape of south India.[57]

Progress in the first four decades of the Portuguese enterprise in Asia was limited, therefore, even if the Parava community was something of a nook for evangelism and mass conversion. A turning-point was the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in 1542, Xavier among them. *Accommodatio* was 'a principle enshrined in Jesuit praxis from the very beginning', Ananya Chakravarti argues, which 'enjoined the spiritual preceptor to adapt the Christian lesson to the capacity and dispositions of his audience.'[58] Realisation of this principle 'demanded from the missionary a sensitivity to the local realities of the mission space and its peoples.'[59] The English Jesuit, Thomas Stephens, reached Goa in 1579, aged about 30. He sought to make Christian teachings knowable in local scripts and tongues, the culmination of which was his *Discurso Sobre a Vinda de Jesu Christo* ('Discourse on the Coming of Jesus Christ'), written in metre in the poetic local language of Marathi.[60] Marking the beginning of successful *accommodatio* that broached teachings and praxis, Stephens' efforts were redoubled by his protégé, Roberto Nobili (1577–1656). His career was as remarkable as it was controversial, for he 'played a role of spiritual preceptor, guru, and miracle worker, of a Brahman *sannyasi* (i.e., renouncer, ascetic) a hybrid role based on both local and European ideas of holiness and religious competence'.[61] All this is even more remarkable given the slender Portuguese authority in the Indian Ocean world was slowly but surely contested by other European powers after c. 1600, with the Dutch even competing with the Portuguese over the Paravas in time.[62]

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[56] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 328.

[57] Ibid, 321–36, 357–60, for the Parava-Portuguese missionary encounter.

Conversion was often spearheaded by indigenous people themselves, however, who proselytised and readied catechumens for the Europeans to baptise them.[63] Catholic missionaries often overlooked non-Christians, especially in the interior, fixing their attentions on the needs of Europeans, Eurasians (a term for people of mixed European and Asian parentage), and Paravas in Portuguese settlements on the littoral. The Paravas and other Christian 'gurus' provided many south Indians with their first contact with Christianity, thus helping to spread those cults that had emerged around St Francis Xavier and other Christian saints deep inland, often long before mission stations were established in the interior. The popularity of devotion to *bhagats* and *pirs* also played a part in spreading such cults, for this allowed Catholicism to slot into existing systems of belief and worship. When missionaries succeeded in performing mass baptisms in the interior, they not only produced converts to Christianity, but became converts themselves – converts, that is, to a kind of indigenised Christianity far removed from what they had practised in Europe and believed they would propagate in Asia.[64]

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[58] Chakravarti, *Apostles*, 9. That said, *accommodatio* 'provoked at least two centuries of disputes between the Jesuits and other missionary orders and church hierarchy, and among the Jesuits themselves', as Županov notes in *Disputed Mission*, 5, for citation, and 22–24, for delineation of the different modes of *accommodation*, and *passim*, on the Indian or Malabar Rites controversy.

[59] Chakravarti, *Apostles*, 9.

[60] Ibid, 200, 201, respectively, for citations, 201–23, for analysis of the text.

[61] Županov, 'Compromise', 359–65, and 364, for citation.

[62] Vink, *Encounters*.

[63] Chakravarti, *Apostles*, 269.

[64] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 380–419, which includes a discussion of Stephens' protegee, Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656), who went further than Stephens by adopting many of the customs and language of south Indian devotionalism in his mission, attracting consternation from

Those Catholic missionaries allied to the Portuguese enterprise thus met with less success than they might have hoped, either in numerical terms or when judged against their own belief that pre-Christian ('pagan', 'heathen') practices had to be dislodged and replaced with suitably Christian ones.[65] The comparison with early modern China, where Christianity made deeper inroads, puts this into relief even more clearly.[66] To return to the relationship of proselytisation and imperialism, we again find that early modern rulers may not have activated mass conversion directly, yet the work of those spiritual agencies allied to imperial states may have supported the expansion and consolidation of empires.[67] And lest we overlook the power of indigenes to variously appropriate or resist European imperialism and Christianity, their tools and institutions, Ângela Barreto Xavier points out how local populations powerfully shaped the Portuguese Empire (or its epicentre in Goa, at least).[68]

3.2 Imperialism and Religious Conflict

So much for conversion, but what about conflict? Belief has the power to shape personal and group identities, loyalties, and lines of difference. But had *religious* identities and a sense of *religious* difference formed by c. 1400 or c. 1500? If not, were events and processes of the early modern period critical to their development? Only by first examining these issues can we probe the link between imperialism and religious conflict.

3.2.1 'Turks' and 'Hindus'

Only in the modern era did religious identities begin to resemble what are often called 'world religions' (e.g., Hinduism, Sikhism, Sunni Islam). In the case of Hinduism, as we have seen, this was a very long-term development, taking centuries and culminating under colonialism, although still incomplete even today. Or, to put it differently, this development had not advanced very far in the final pre-colonial centuries. Processes of contrasting and thereby demarcating this or that belief system off from others *were* underway, not least as actors formed a sense of difference or experienced feelings of boundary-crossing or alienness when moving outside of their communities or milieu – which they were increasingly wont to do in early modern times – as evinced in travellers'

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other Catholics, and which also analyses how missionaries reified – rather than eliminated – caste status.

[65] On the religious-cum-epistemological encounter, see, also: Xavier and Županov, *Catholic Orientalism*, 115–57.

[66] Bailey, 'Religious Encounters', offers a useful overview of early modern Christian missions and the missionary encounter in Asia.

[67] Chakravarti, *Apostles*, 280–314.

[68] Xavier, *Goa*.

accounts from as far afield as the Qing Empire or the Persianate world.[69] Yet, these had seldom advanced far enough to speak of believers being 'Hindu' or 'Sikh' or 'Muslim' or 'Christian', as we shall see, let alone for any sense of religious difference to find expression in 'broad communal terms' or for 'essentialisations of social types' to become 'fixed in a racialist hierarchy', as it would in the colonial era.[70]

Indeed, Indians describing those invaders and migrants from beyond the Indus many centuries ago *did* articulate a sense of the latter's difference, but in ethnic or political terms, rather than as Muslims or even merely as non-Hindus.[71] Often, they were described merely as *turushka* (Turks), since they came from the Turkish lands or Turko-Mongol world. Or they might be denounced as *mleccha* (barbarians), usually when they disturbed the socio-political and moral order orchestrated by Brahmans.[72] In early modern times, therefore, few non-Muslims called themselves 'Hindus'; when the rulers of the Vijayanagara Empire called themselves sultans among Hindu kings, 'they were most probably declaring their paramount status among the non-Turkish [i.e., non-Muslim] polities of the peninsula'.[73] To be Hindu, on this interpretation, simply meant not being 'Turkish'.[74]

Over the early modern period, however, the intensity of Hindu-Muslim contact varied more dramatically and so representations of Muslims became more varied, too.[75] There was also a spatial dimension to this phenomenon, for reports of temple desecration surfaced largely at the edges of the advancing frontier of Indo-Muslim power, with implications for how Muslims were described. Cynthia Talbot has examined Sanskrit and Telugu inscriptions from southeastern India between 1323 and 1650, finding reference to Muslim groups as Yavanas (from Ionian and referring to Indo-Greeks) and Shakas (a central Asian group who displaced the Yavanas), which was the name given in the ancient scriptures for non-Brahmanical 'Others'; the concern was not for the specifics of Muslim belief but that some groups 'whether foreign invaders or indigenous tribal peoples' were 'barbarians' in the sense of residing outside the Brahmanical tradition.[76] If this demonised Muslims, it was in the sense of their representation 'as being like the demons of ancient myth who engaged in endless battle against the forces of good'; absorption into such mythological categories erased the very distinctiveness of being Muslim.[77] In periods and places where Hindu polities were on the defensive, anti-Turk polemic was widespread, but the language was more accepting in peaceful situations and when the political and moral order was not disturbed, with Muslims even finding praise for their military skills and the achievements brought by their administrative technologies. It should be noted that 'conceptions of the Muslim were never monolithic or uniform', however, so that both antipathetic and tolerant terms could be found in any particular phase.[78] Such findings urge historians to look 'beyond Turk and Hindu' to determine the other axes or lineaments of identity and loyalty in early modern India, while reminding us to distinguish Indic from Hindu and Islamicate from Muslim (§1.3.1).[79]

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[69] Such processes were arguably central to Mughal *sulh-i kull*, which is examined in the next section. See: Pye, 'Sufi Method', 914–15. On boundary crossing and difference: Perdue, 'Crossing Borders'; Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian* Travels, 175–242.

[70] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 28.

[71] Or, by categorising what had formerly been seen as the distinct and competing schools of Sanskrit learning into a unity, Indic specialists allegedly began to formulate a 'proto-Hindu' identity against some indistinct 'Other': Nair, 'Sanskrit Doxography', for a critical evaluation of such arguments.

[72] Eaton, 'Introduction',

[73] Talbot, 'Inscribing', 91.

[74] Ibid, 91.

[75] Ibid, 107.

[76] Ibid, 89.

3.2.2 Muslim Conquest and Conflict

Indo-Muslim rulers held sway over a majority non-Muslim population and naturally safeguarded Islam, yet these facts did not necessarily entail conflict along communal lines. Although 'the domination of Islam over Hinduism was guaranteed in theory by the Mughal emperor, whose title always included the sobriquet of "holy warrior" (*badshah-i ghazi*),' Abhishek Kaicker notes, this fact 'does not appear to have been a source of discomfort to his Hindu subjects (no matter how much it would disturb future generations).'[80] At the same time, even rulers such as Aurangzeb – who strove to 'improve the lamentable state of orthopraxy in his empire' (§3.3.1, §6.3.1–§6.3.2, §7.3.3) – struggled to deal satisfactorily with religious festivals and rituals that subverted Indo-Muslim sovereignty in some way or other. These included Shiʿi practices of mourning during Muharram, which Sunni authorities viewed as heretical, and the spring festival of Holi, which was celebrated by Hindus and also Muslims, involving licentiousness and ritualised subversions of the social order.[81] Just as Indo-Muslim rulers made little headway with conversion, so their efforts to deal with potentially subversive expressions of their subjects' beliefs were often disregarded. Yet, it would be wrong to think of Indo-Muslim rulers as impotent, for their aims were not narrowly restricted to the promotion of Islam, a task in which they may have had little success, but rather the management of diversity, in pursuit of which they patronised non-Muslim religious communities, as we shall see.

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[77] Ibid, 89.

[78] Ibid, 108. Truschke, in *Language of History*, especially 66–211, offers an even broader and more complex picture of attitudes towards Muslims and Indo-Muslim rule as found in Sanskrit histories from across the medieval and early modern Indian subcontinent.

[79] See: Gilmartin and Lawrence's 'Introduction' to their *Beyond Turk and Hindu* and the rest of that important edited volume.

[80] Kaicker, *The King*, 160.

[81] Ibid, 162.

What about conquest itself? Was it motivated by religious difference or else might it be fruitfully analysed as a conflict arrayed along religious lines? When it comes to the Islamic world, our understanding has long been coloured by the supposed 'clash' since the Crusades between Christendom and Islam and the supposed alterity of Muslim states constructed by Europeans over the centuries – what Edward Said termed 'Orientalism'. The conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) by the Ottomans from the Byzantines, for example, sent shock waves through Christian Europe, resulting in a fixation on 'Muslim iconoclasm' (e.g., the conversion of the basilica of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque), ignoring how the repurposing of certain structures was matched by continuities (including of freedom of worship).[82] The centuries of Muslim rule over the Indian subcontinent was painted by European writers as an interruption from which colonialism could deliver Indians and restore their proper (read: Hindu) 'civilisation'.[83] Note, as Eaton does, that the Spanish conquest of the Americas has never been described as a 'Christian' conquest in the way Sultanate and Mughal expeditions have so readily been called 'Muslim' conquest.[84] Nevertheless, what is even more significant is how communalist historians latched onto these racialised discourses for their own ends, drawing out examples of temple destruction or desecration by Muslim conquerors to paint the period from c.1000 to c. 1750 as an unwelcome 'Muslim interregnum' and to tar Muslims – past and present – as alien, as intruders, and as the despoilers of Indian culture, religion, and heritage.[85]

The memory and memorialisation of iconoclasm is highly emotive and politically charged in contemporary south Asia, but like all remembrances, what appears or seems so true can really be a distortion. To make sense of this, Richard M. Eaton and Philip B. Wagoner try to put temple desecration/destruction into its larger context. What, they ask, did victors do with the cluttered built landscape, comprising structures from earlier occupants of the land as well as the freshly defeated regime, and why?[86] Wishing 'to assert their own claims to possessing the land and its people, the new rulers actually faced a range of options', for

> They might continue to patronize pre-existing structures in the manner their defeated rivals had done. They might rebuild them. They might redefine them. They might imitate them. They might destroy them. Or, they might ignore them altogether.[87]

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[82] Boyar and Fleet, *Social History*, especially 1–5. For a useful survey, see: Greene, 'Violence and Religion'.

[83] The best analysis of these ideas and their legacy down to the present day remains: Metcalf, 'Reflections', especially 952–56.

[84] Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 4.

[85] Ibid, 3–10.

[86] Eaton and Wagoner, *Contested Sites*, 40.

[87] Ibid, 40. See, also: Moin, 'Sovereign Violence', 470.

Against the notion of Muslim iconoclasts, therefore, we have evidence of Muslims reinstating Hindu temples as well as other religious or royal structures, for it was the 'least intrusive form of active intervention in a built environment'.[88] Acts of destruction or desecration, by contrast, were the most intrusive. And even more drastic was destruction followed by a reassemblage of materials into new structures, this recycling of materials a part of establishing continuities between old and new amidst the disjuncture of a new reigning dynasty.[89] Thus, desecration/destruction carried weighty political meanings and had to be carefully planned and executed.[90]

To properly comprehend temple destruction/desecration, and to grasp why it seldom had much to do with religious difference *per se*, we must first understand the charged connection between incumbent temporal authorities and particular religious structures (e.g., temples, mosques) or religious figures (i.e., deities or saints). Vijayanagara's first rulers, for example, adopted a form of Shiva known as Virupaksha as their family deity. This association of deity and kingdom endured until later kings shifted their favour to Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, whose life-story – as told in the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana* – could be powerfully linked to the city of Vijayanagara, and whose valorous fight against the evil king Ravanna usefully served as an emblem for the empire's rulers.[91] In smaller kingdoms, too, particular Hindu deities and the temples dedicated to them were associated with particular ruling houses. Take, for instance, the temple of Eklingji (a form of Shiva), not far from Udaipur. Built in the tenth century, it was rebuilt in the fifteenth century and transformed into a royal lineage temple 'intended to validate the Sisodiya Rajput rulers, who claimed the deity Eklingji was the state's real ruler and the king his human agent, the prime minister.'[92] The impetus to destroy or desecrate temples was like a two-sided coin. The powerful connection of religious institutions to the scions of Indian dynasties explains one side; the other side had more to do with the position of the conquering Indo-Muslim kings.

From medieval times, Indo-Muslim kings came to believe that the blessing of Sufis was the key to their worldly success (§2.2.2). Royal patronage of Sufi institutions and holy men like the Chishti *shaikhs* helped dynasties appear 'legitimately Islamic and authentically Indian'.[93] In this way, Indo-Islamicate states were infused with a distinctive legitimising 'substance', which entailed not only the sweeping away of political rivals, but also of their legitimising substances. It follows that, where a Hindu raja's legitimacy was associated with a royal temple and his dynasty's state deity (*rashtra-devata*, usually Shiva or Vishnu), Indo-Muslim kings would naturally wish to destroy, desecrate, or redefine that temple and its deity. In contrast, temples not connected to the ruler or not serving as the wellspring of his authority were to be left unharmed. Instead of seeing this as 'Muslim iconoclasm', Eaton situates these acts within their Indic context: a connection of land or territory with a god or temple and with a king and his dynasty was of such long standing that, 'from about the sixth century on, images and temples associated with dynastic authority were considered political vulnerable.'[94] The historical record thus abounds with examples of Hindu (and Buddhist) kings in India and Sri Lanka carrying off statues of state deities as part of the contestation of rivals' political authority.[95]

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[88] Ibid, 66.

[89] Ibid, 67–68.

[90] The discussion draws on: Eaton, 'Temple Desecration'.

[91] Rao, 'Rama Cult', examines this subject.

[92] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 119.

[93] Eaton, 'Temple Desecration', 251–54, 267–68, and citation on 252.

From the late twelfth century, temple desecration occurred at the behest of military officers or rulers at the moving military frontier of the Indo-Islamicate states of the north. With the retreat of Tughluq imperialism and the emergence of its successor states, temple desecration continued as a means of challenging the political legitimacy of rival centres. Vijaynagara's domination over the Raichur *doab* and Tamil coast was contested by the Bahmani sultans through acts of desecration, while the latter's own successor states (Bijapur and Golkonda) challenged the authority of the Orissan kings in this way in the later sixteenth and seventeenth century. The Malwa sultans contested the renewal of Rajput power in eastern Rajasthan in the mid-fifteenth century, followed in the early sixteenth century by the Lodi dynasty's efforts to reassert Delhi's control over Rajasthan, each associated with acts of temple desecration or destruction. The Mughals, upon breaking out of the Lodi domains and into lands ruled by Hindu rajas followed suit, sometimes even converting temples into mosques.[96] Occasionally, where an Indo-Muslim king feared the renewal of a rival's power or was angered by the latter's disloyalty, he might order the desecration of a temple or deity. Hence, for example, Jahangir's orders for the desecration of an idol housed in a temple belonging to the uncle of the Mewar raja in 1613, or Shah Jahan's destruction in 1635 of the temple at Orccha patronised by the father of a high-ranking imperial serviceman, Raja Jajhar Singh, who was then in open rebellion against the centre, or Aurangzeb's destruction in 1679 of temples in Rajasthan associated with his political enemies.[97]

Balancing any temple desecration, however, were politically expedient acts to win over local society: support for local religious institutions, whether for the rebuilding or repair of particular temples so that worship was not disturbed too long; permitting the building of new temples, so long as the poll tax on non-believers (*jizya*) was paid; and the protection – sometimes even the patronage – of non-Muslim religious institutions. Akbar supported the building of temples by his high-ranking Rajput serviceman, Man Singh (Fig. 3.5; see: §9.3.1). Shah Jahan, too, allowed Mughal officials to oversee (or even initiate) the renewal of the local cult of Jagannath in Puri, Odisha, in ways that visibly connected the annual festival to the Mughal state.[98] Aurangzeb may have forbidden the building of new temples, and instructed that they be torn down, but likewise renewed the official stance ensuring protection of religious communities and their existing buildings.[99]

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[94] Ibid, 255.

[95] Ibid, 255–56.

[96] Ibid, 257–60 for details of these examples of temple desecration, and 260 for discussion of examples of the seizing of deities.

[97] Ibid, 264–65. See, more recently: Pauwels, 'Tale', 288–90.

If Muslims protected and even patronised non-Muslim sites, the reverse was also true, with the Marathas patronising Muslim institutions, as Stewart Gordon highlights. Whatever the fiercely anti-Muslim invective found in some Maratha literature of the times, and though displacing Muslim officeholders and claimants of landed rights was critical to the process of Maratha conquest, the Marathas nevertheless supported Muslim holy men, *dargah*s, Quran recitation, and the celebration of Muslim festivals in mid-eighteenth century Burhanpur and Khandesh. They did so in a spirit of political pragmatism and in maintenance of the precedent set by the Deccan sultans and Mughal emperors, being their heirs, after all.[100] That said, Hindu kings might also try and humiliate their rivals by destroying significant buildings associated with a Muslim dynasty. Mosque desecration in the Muslim-ruled sultanates of the northern Deccan by the authority of Vijayanagara's ruler in the early sixteenth century stands as one example.[101] If there are fewer instances of mosque desecration, however, it is because these structures were seen as politically inactive and were thus insignificant as targets of a Muslim dynasty's (Muslim or Hindu) political rivals.[102]

Whether to conquer or to govern, Indian rulers not only had to forge alliances across broad confessional lines (i.e., between Muslims and Hindus), but also across sectarian lines (e.g., the Sunni-Shiʿi or Vaishnava-Shaiva divides). This fact reminds us, vice versa, that Indian society contained multiple axes of socio-religious difference and potential discord. Violent conflict with religious communities holding opposing views was not the norm, except where, for instance, rival Shaiva or Vaishnava monastic orders threatened temples and other institutions. Taking another angle, the (Sunni) Mughals could present their conflict with the Shiʿi rulers of Ahmednagar and Golkonda and their expansion into the Deccan as a righteous struggle against heresy, even striving to repress public demonstrations of Shiʿism; hence, for example, Shah Jahan's order that the Qutb Shahis desist from including the name of the Twelve Imams and the Safavid rulers in the Friday congregational prayers made in the name of the sovereign (the *khutba*).[103] But the entry of increasing numbers of Iranians – mostly Shiʿis – into Mughal state service tempered open sectarian conflict or pronouncements against heterodoxy, even as Sunnism retained its primacy in the north before the eighteenth century, when Shi‘ism began to leave a greater mark on the religious landscape thanks to such men as Burhan ul-Mulk, the Mughal satrap in eighteenth-century Awadh.[104] Beyond courtly and elite circles, popular riots occasionally broke out during Muharram festivities between Sunnis and the celebrants, who were predominately Shi‘i yet also included some Hindus (participation by the latter hardly surprising given the fluid nature of early modern Indian society), as occurred in Bijapur in 1596 and in Lahore in 1625, for instance.[105]

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[98] Eaton, 'Temple Desecration', 262.
[99] Ibid, 263.
[100] Gordon, 'Maratha Patronage'.
[101] Eaton and Wagoner, 'Warfare', 38.
[102] Eaton, 'Temple Desecration', 266–67.
[103] Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 171–77.

These were uncommon, however, and we must be careful not to overdetermine these riots as religiously motivated. Group protests occurring around the time of Holi might tip into rioting and mob violence, but their original impetus was often political rather than religious, or sprang not from communal difference but petty rivalry, jealousies, or even suspicion toward wealthy mercantile assemblies.[106] The meaning of social violence only becomes destructive, Sanjay Subrahmanyam observes, when it takes on the hue of a grievance.[107] And, moreover, communal and sectarian differences did not produce anything like the assault on Catholic worship and the passing of anti-Catholic laws during the English Reformation; the French Wars of Religion between Catholics and the Huguenots (1562–98) or the Thirty Years' War between the Catholics and Lutherans in the Holy Roman Empire (1618-48); or the intermittent yet generations-long conflict fought on the borderland between the (Sunni) Ottomans and the (Shi‘i) Safavids that finally ended in 1639.[108]

3.3 The State and Diversity

Was there a separation of political from religious offices in early modern Indo-Muslim states? Two institutions are central to our understanding of this issue. The first is the *ulama*, which was not a priesthood, as might be found in Christendom, or a priestly caste, as per the Brahmans. The *ulama* comprised men of learning educated in diverse religious schools (*madrasas*) who often blended into society at large, not least by staffing the legal administration of the state (§7.3.3), but sometimes stood out as public intellectuals and as part of the literati. They were not of one mind and consequently did not form an establishment or organised faction per se, yet could be powerful, nonetheless.[109] The second is *sharia* or Islamic law. There remains no singular opinion on Islamic jurisprudence, which instead formed into schools of thought, the most famous being the Hanafi, Hanbali, and Shafiʿi. While they all share the Quran as one source of deriving the *sharia*, they differ in their use of ancillary sources and the method of deriving legal advice from them in cases where there is ambiguity.[110] We might usefully see *sharia* not as a fixed code or monument, therefore, but as a 'workable basis for judicial practice'.[111] It could also be interpreted to fit the context of its operation: Zia al-Din Barani (d. c.1360), who served the Delhi Sultans, saw *sharia* 'as requiring a king to manage the interests of Muslims only', whereas Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274), 'who served a non-Muslim Mongol ruler in Iran, interpreted the *sharia* as requiring a king to ensure the well-being of *all* the diverse groups in his kingdom, and not just the Muslims.'[112]

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[104] Chanchal, *From Stone*, 11–12. Reflexively, for their part, the Adil Shahis were likewise not hard-line Shi‘is but fairly liberal; see: Eaton and Wagoner, *Contested Sites*, 134.

[105] Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia*, 91–92.

[106] Bayly, 'Pre-History', 194–201, offers an insightful reading of urban riots vis-à-vis those structural and institutional changes underway in the late Mughal period. See, also: Hasan, *State and Locality*, 66–67, 69–70; Haider, 'Holi Riot', for an excellent critical analysis of two subtly conflicting accounts of events in Ahmedabad in spring 1714.

[107] Subrahmanyam, *Tagus to the Ganges*, 89.

[108] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*. Diefendorf, 'Religious Wars'; Burkhardt, 'Thirty Years' War', are useful introductions to the Continental wars. On the last, see: Greene, 'Violence and Religion'; Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 97–106, for primary sources.

3.3.1 Justice and Charity

What place did *sharia* have within Mughal India, a majority non-Muslim state? Being a Muslim dynasty, and one in competition with other Muslim rulers, the Mughals' conception of justice, government, and imperial sovereignty was articulated through a framework structured by Islamic(ate) norms. One source was *sharia*, interpreted along the more inclusivist lines set out by Nasir al-Din Tusi. Others bore *sharia's* imprint even as they were fairly cosmopolitan, not least works of *akhlaq* and the conversations (*malfuzat*) of Sufi saints.[113] The conception of justice thus articulated was capacious enough to permit religious toleration without 'compromising' Islamic law.[114] The *sharia* did not only inform these 'high-level' concepts, however, for it had a vital role in actual legal process across the empire, not least the resolution of day-to-day legal disputes.

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[109] Darwin, *Tamerlane*, 37–38, for some of the implications of this feature of Islamic society in comparison with Europe. Lefèvre, 'Messianism, Rationalism', 324–34, details some of the weaknesses in the historiographical treatment of the '*ulama* as a 'class' despite their diversity, noting (on 325–26) that they still largely 'tend to be assessed for their upholding of (or divergence from) the so-called Sunni orthodoxy and their endorsement of (or disobedience to) state policies, but too rarely for their own sake, as intellectuals whose initial formation was possibly later challenged by exposure to alternative scholarly or mystical trends and the need to earn one's living' – before providing a snapshot of a cross-section of the *ulama* from the early Jahangiri era.

[110] There were also important differences of opinion and voicing of dissent within a school, as Burak has shown in *Second Formation* (especially 163–206) regarding the Hanafi school in the Ottoman lands.

[111] Eaton, 'Introduction' [2], 22.

[112] Ibid, 22–23. See, also: Alam, *Languages*, 46–54.

[113] These also had a broader 'audience' than just the Muslim community only, although a narrowly 'elite' one, nevertheless, see: Alam, *Languages*, especially 26–80.

[114] Chatterjee, 'Reflections', 401–03, offers a useful summary of the historiography on *sharia* in Mughal India.

Ordinary justice was dispensed in *sharia* courts, of which non-Muslims also made extensive use, alongside a range of other institutions in a state that can be described as 'permissively inclusive' on account of the degree of legal pluralism (§4.2.3, §7.3.3).[115]

We shall return to Aurangzeb's significant contribution to this development of Mughal law, its causes, character, and implications, in later chapters. What concerns us presently is one of Aurangzeb's more controversial measures: his reintroduction in 1679 of the *jizya*, a poll tax on non-believers in accordance with *sharia* prescripts regarding relations between Muslim rulers and non-Muslim subjects.[116] At the face of it, reversing Akbar's abolition of the *jizya* marked the triumph of less conciliatory views of the sort associated with the famous Naqshbandi *shaikh*, Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624), over more 'liberal' ones, like those espoused by Aurangzeb's rival for the throne, Dara Shukoh (1615–59), whose thinking finds parallel in the work of another Naqshbandi *shaikh*, Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (d. 1781).[117] It occurred against the backdrop of the emperor's expensive and protracted campaigning in the Deccan and the political crisis that it created, in turn. Yet, the immediate motive was neither economic, as per European rulers' periodic harassment of Jewish communities for cash, for the revenue from the tax was negligible in the grand scheme of things. Nor was it to punish non-Muslims or to force their obedience, as per the Safavids' harassment of wealthy Hindu merchants and the curtailment of 'non-Muslim' businesses (e.g., liquor sales) in the late seventeenth century.[118] After all, it was hardly worth Aurangzeb waiting out the first twenty-two years of his reign to pursue something so heavy-handed as to backfire by churning grievance and discontent. Rather, his motive was to placate (bribe, as Satish Chandra put it) powerful sections of Muslim society – not the ruling elite, but the Sunni *ulama* – who were looking for the emperor to signal his commitment to Islam.[119]

Alternatively, we might note that 'in Hanafi jurisprudential thought, the poll tax served as a legal obligation that gave formal status to a non-Muslim group', such that the re-imposition of the *jizya* 'could simply be regarded as part and parcel of Aurangzeb's other attempts to discipline and mould the many communities under his care by way of the law'.[120] Yet, the decision was neither a mere 'meaningless gesture', as Chandra described it, nor did the emperor's non-Muslim subjects accept it willingly.[121] A Zoroastrian merchant and broker of Surat, Seth Rustamji Manikji, lamented the poll tax as an instance of 'tyranny' falling disproportionately on the poor and took to trying to ameliorate its effects. Add to this great numbers of Delhi's non-Muslim residents gathering under the balcony where the emperor heard pleas and protests, where they made their demand for justice. These protests continued in other venues throughout the city and, even once they had died down, local opposition to *jizya* persisted until – after Aurangzeb's death – the erstwhile emperor's closest (Muslim) nobles and advisors moved to re-abolish the tax, which they effected in 1712.[122]

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[115] Chatterjee, 'Reflections', 403.

[116] For the long view on non-Muslim subjects and the *jizya* from Sultanate times: Auer, 'Regulating Diversity'.

[117] Friedmann, 'Islamic Thought'. See, however: Kinra, 'Infantilising', which presents a more complex picture of Dara Shukoh via analysis of contemporaries' assessments of the prince, thus helping us move beyond the oppositional contrast of Aurangzeb as conservative, narrow-minded, and unloved vs. Dara as liberal, cosmopolitanist, and widely adored.

[118] Dale, *Muslim Empires*, 251–53.

[119] Chandra, '*Jizyah*'.

[120] Kaicker, *The King*, 172.

[121] Chandra, '*Jizyah*', 338.

If legislating such discriminatory taxes reflected the influence and pressures placed by Church upon State from time to time, we should note that princes could more generally keep the clergy at bay by other means. Through its patronage, the court provided a means of supporting not only the orthodox religious establishment or Sufi *tariqas* linked to the ruling house, but a far wider range of religious actors. A key institution was the grant known as *madad-i ma'ash* ('aid for subsistence') or sometimes as *suyurghal* (as it was called in central Asia) and *imlak* (in the Delhi Sultanate). This was essentially a charitable grant by which the sovereign alienated his right to collect taxes, often in perpetuity, thereby sparing peasants and zamindars from state interference.[123] These were granted as acts of charity, most usually as a beneficence bestowed upon religious and learned individuals or institutions (i.e., mosques, temples, shrine complexes, monasteries), but sometimes as a means of supporting destitute gentlefolk. That said, recipients might go on to acquire *zamindaris* or otherwise derive profit from revenue-farming estates. An important category of these grants is known as *waqf*, which were bestowed upon institutions for the repair and maintenance of religious buildings such as shrines, tombs, and *madrasas*; for the subsistence of their staff; and for their charitable activities, such as *langar*.[124] Aside from the Mughal emperor, those zamindars and rajas who held their territories as hereditary *jagirs* (§7.1.3) were free to make such grants. Raja Anirudh Singh of Bundi, for example, gave an entire village in *madad-i ma'ash* to a member of the retinue of the Chishti shrine at Ajmer in 1689-90. Others, even smaller landed elites, made grants to their retainers or Brahmans and other religious groups.[125]

3.3.2 Religion at the Royal Court

Aurangzeb's 'bribing' of the *ulama* by re-instituting the poll tax was a response to pressures steadily building, in fact, since the reign of his great-great-grandfather,

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[122] Kaicker, *The King*, 172–73, where it is noted that the tax was reinstated and abolished a number of times in the early eighteenth century.

[123] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 342–63.

[124] For an excellent and concise guide to *waqf*, its endowment and administration, and its relationship to urban life panning across the Muslim world: Deguilhem, '*Waqf*'.

[125] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 363.

Akbar. Akbar had briefly styled himself as leader of Muslims (*badshah-i islam*), but his tenure was a failure, and so the emperor radically changed direction and pursued a more conciliatory policy toward non-Muslims.[126] In 1575, Akbar ordered construction of the *Ibadat Khana* (House of Worship). There, he engaged Muslim theologians of various stripes in late-night dialogues on religious matters, eventually extending invitations to Brahmans, Jains, Zoroastrians, and Catholics, each expatiating and defending their beliefs.[127] Akbar broke with the opinion of the *ulama* a few years later when – following the bitter controversy regarding the emperor's many marriages – he sent into exile to Mecca two of the most important orthodox Sunni clerics at court. Akbar then proclaimed himself the ultimate spiritual authority of the realm – that is, for all peoples, of all faiths – in place of the *ulama*.[128]

Although lasting only a few years, the dialogues within the *Ibadat Khana*, combined with Akbar's parting of ways with Sunni orthodoxy, paved the way for something entirely new.[129] Termed *muridi* (discipleship) in the official Mughal sources, and in others *tawhid-i ilahi* ('divine monism'), *ikhlas-i chahargana* ('four degrees of devotion'), or, most commonly, *din-i ilahi* ('divine religion'), Akbar established his cult of personality in 1581.[130] This devotion was predicated on the melding of an eclectic range of influences (§8.2). In striving to make himself the font of religion and justice, we might compare Akbar with Henry VIII (r. 1509–47), who imposed his royal supremacy in the earlier part of the century. In both the Mughal and Tudor realms, the reformulation of the relationship between established Church and State necessitated the dangerous sweeping aside of the clerical establishment to cries of heresy, yet differed in one vital respect: Henry VIII's was a wholesale dissolution of the monasteries and saw the creation of an English Church headed by the monarch, whereas Akbar's creativity fruited within the confines of the palace walls.[131]

Ultimately, the resultant departure from Islamic prescripts and norms scandalised and alienated part of the *ulama*. In the first place, there was the fact that his Muslim disciples' worship of Allah was to be direct and unmediated. Second, was the nature and extent of the devotion and veneration of the emperor himself, almost tantamount to idolatry and certainly a kind of heresy. One ritual commenced at noon on Sundays, when neophytes swore to sacrifice life, property, religion, and honour – the four degrees of devotion – in the service of their *pir*, Akbar.[132] These men removed and placed their turbans at the *murid-padshah*'s feet and prostrated themselves in submission and shedding of their own conceit and desire, to then be raised up by the emperor, who placed turbans on their heads to mark the commencement of their new life. They even wore a portrait image of the emperor in their turbans.[133] Finally, there were other practices – generally drawn from Brahmanical or other Indic customs – that were not strictly 'Islamic', such as abstaining from eating meat.[134] The *din-i ilahi* has been hailed by some liberally minded and well-meaning historians as a pantheistic project or syncretic new religion, borrowing from the religious traditions of the Mughal world to bridge the differences dividing the Mughal emperor's subjects. In actual fact, it was much more limited in scope than that, being a project of bonding a small number of intimates at court.[135]

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[126] Khan, 'Religious Policy'.

[127] Moin, *Millennial*, 133.

[128] O'Hanlon, 'Kingdom', 905.

[129] Truschke, *Culture*, 13–14, where it is noted that Jahangir continued to converse with diverse holy men.

[130] Moin, *Millennial*, 131.

[131] See: Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, especially 163–302.

[132] O'Hanlon, 'Kingdom', 906.

In early modern India, the early Mughals were not unique for engaging with diverse beliefs. The Mughal emperors from Humayun to Jahangir were ecumenical, interested in esoteric knowledges, and had catholic intellectual tastes, in such respects sharing much in common with Akbar's direct contemporary, 'Ali 'Adil Shah (r. 1558–80), sultan of Bijapur. The keeper of the Bijapur royal library was a Brahman pandit, employed alongside some sixty men skilled in calligraphy, gilding, illumination, bookbinding, etc.[136] Curious to learn about other religions, 'Ali Adil Shah even requested the Archbishop of Goa send priests to educate him about Christianity.[137] His successor, Ibrahim Adil Shah II (r. 1580–1627), went well beyond toleration of an eclectic range of religious and philosophical beliefs. Such was his ecumenicalism, he even took the Brahmanical title of *jagatguru* (spiritual master of the universe) and adopted the dress of yogis, having developed a fascination with those mystical Hindu traditions that were at this time also melding with Sufism (§2.3).[138]

It bears remembering that the actual number of disciples of Akbar's new religion was small, consciously restricted to a select group of courtiers, and the whole enterprise ultimately died with the emperor.[139] It seems dubious, moreover, to describe Akbar's *din* in the benign language of syncretism, pluralism, or hybridity, as a project in cosmopolitanism or the making of a composite culture.[140] By placing it in a longer trajectory, from Babur's to Shah Jahan's reign,

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[133] Richards, *Mughal*, 47–48.

[134] O'Hanlon, 'Kingdom', 906.

[135] On this last point: Asher and Talbot, *India*, 155. For a classic presentation of the polarisation of the debate and its implications: Alam, 'Competition'.

[136] Eaton and Wagoner, *Contested Sites*, 134.

[137] Ibid, 134.

[138] For a portrait of 'Hindu-Muslim' 'cultural syncretism' under Ibrahim Adil Shah II's auspices: Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 89–105; Eaton and Wagoner, *Contested Sites*, 156. For a more complex picture: Fischel, *Local States*, 163–79.

Note that the king-as-yogi theme was already becoming widespread just before Ibrahim Adil Shah II's time, influencing work by one of Vijaynagara's rulers yet also evident in the presentation of Sultan Bahadur of Gujarat (r. 1526–37): Narayana Rao *et al*, 'New Imperial Idiom', 75–77.

[139] For the context to this decision: Truschke, *Culture*, 41.

[140] To this can be added the conceptual limitations of 'syncretism'; see: Stewart, 'Translation Theory'; Metcalf, 'Reflections', 960.

Akbar's *din* appears as one of a series of engagements with esoteric and often embodied forms of beliefs and practices regarding discipleship, sainthood, and sacred kingship (§8.3). Broader still, the Mughal and Deccani courts' celebration of the Hindu spring festival of Holi, as well as Dussehra and Diwali in autumn, was part of the maintenance of alliances and the performance of sovereignty in what were ultimately plural or cosmopolitan states. Similarly, the Safavids perpetuated the pre-Islamic springtime festival marking the new year (Nowruz, lit. 'New Day') and, in a subtler departure from Islamic and toward local customs, the Ottomans created new and highly public celebrations around an Islamic rite of passage (i.e., the imperial circumcision ceremony).[141]

A great deal has been written about syncretic cultures created in imperial courts, from the Habsburg Empire to the Qing Great State, perhaps more to do with the richness of the documentary record than the actual significance of these endeavours. Critically examining the marriage of Indic and Islamicate elements at the Mughal or other courts, it is worth reflecting on what they actually represent and thus how they can best be described. Does the fusion of different cultural forms mark a celebration of diversity in the empire or does it, in fact, represent the effort of making more palatable (and more visible) the very fact of imperialism? Does it represent the imperial centre's patronage of the distinct cultures of empire or a bid to exert a mastery over them, even suppress them through control in some cases? Can terms such as syncretism distinguish deep engagement from mere lip-service paid to interest groups? Cynicism about the matter of intentions aside, the latter questions point to the power dynamics inhering within the amalgam itself – the relative agency and (a)symmetrical relation of different ingredients, the relative freedom and beliefs of stakeholders in the process of creation, what is lost or suppressed or subordinated in consequence, and so forth.

3.3.3 Translation and Cross-Cultural Encounter

One novel site of inquiry that is yielding more complex ideas about culture, power, and kingship is Akbar's and his successors' patronage of literary translation – specifically, the translation into Persian of Sanskrit texts, as revealed so brilliantly by Audrey Truschke. This endeavour represented a self-conscious expansion of pre-Mughal cross-cultural exchange of this sort, such as the Lodi sultans' patronage of Persian translations of the stories contained in the *Panchatantra* ('Five Tales'), which had already entered the Arabic corpus as the *Kalila wa Dimna* (Fig. 3C).[142] A landmark was the translation of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata* into Persian at Akbar's request in the 1580s, roughly the

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[141] This sliding spectrum of accommodation of local festivals within an essentially Islamic calendrical-ceremonial framework, and the extent of innovation (vis-à-vis extant and new rites and celebrations), is surveyed in: Blake, *Time*, 76–106. See, also: Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia*, 101–02, on Deccani courts.

[142] Truschke, *Culture*, 10–12, 64–66.

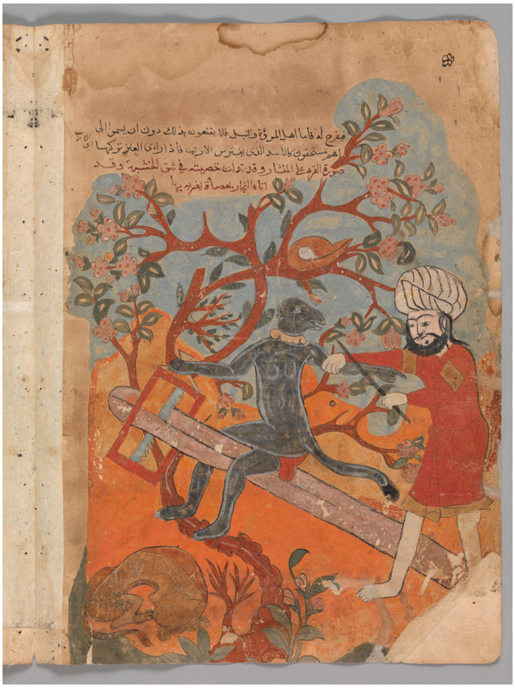


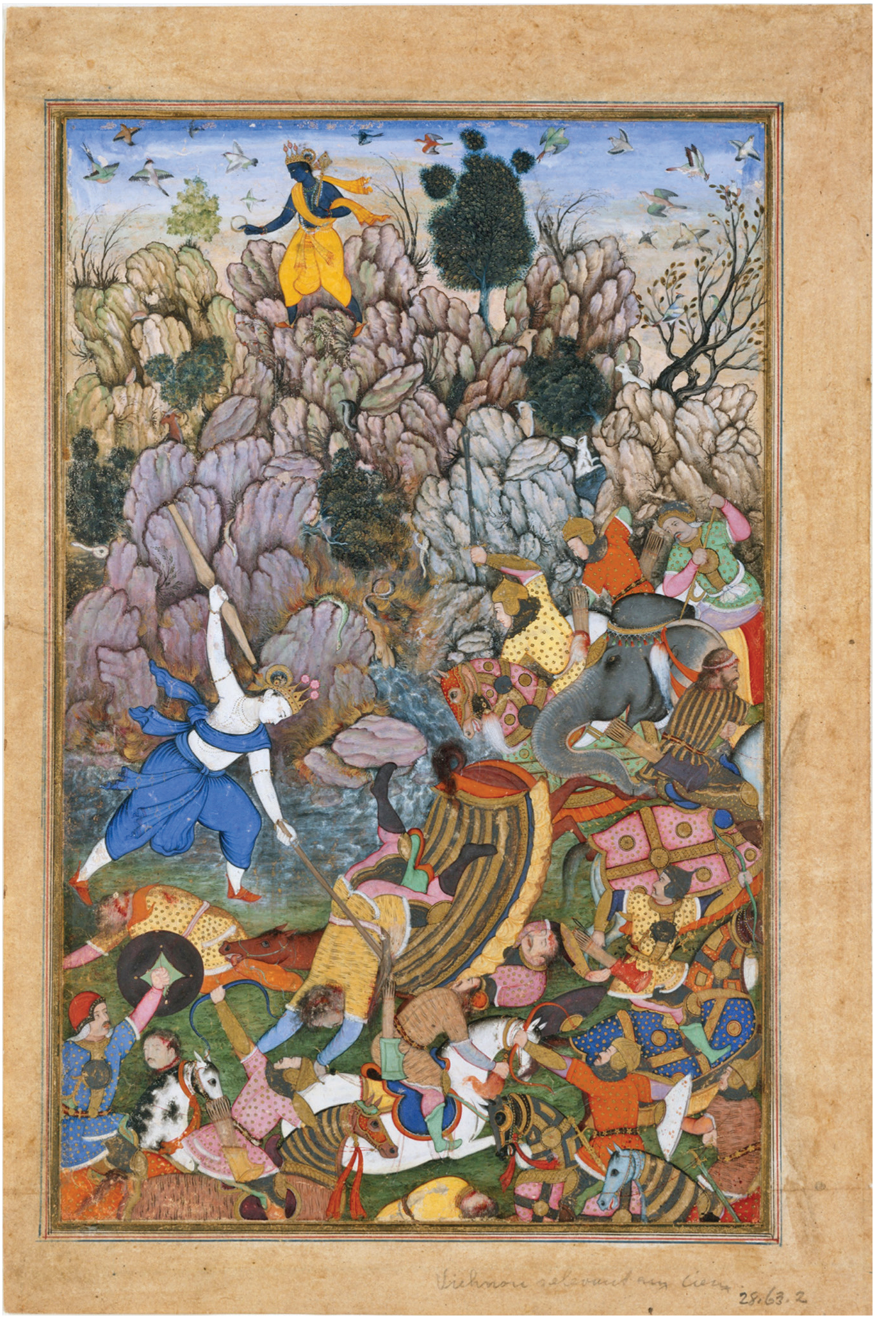
Fig. 3C The Monkey Tries Carpentry, from the *Kalila wa Dimna*, (ink and watercolour; possibly Gujarati; early sixteenth century)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1981.373.26

same time as the birth of the *din-i ilahi*. The result was not only the *Razmnama* ('Book of War'), a text that found its way into the curriculum of royal princes, frequently reproduced with accompanying miniature paintings, with portions of it reworked by Mughal literati as part of an ongoing engagement with the epic.[143] The result was larger than translation and these repeated encounters; it was the remaking 'of a Sanskrit epic into an imperially potent part of the Indo-Persian tradition.'[144] The same may be said of the remaking of the genealogy of (Hari) Krishna into the Persian *Harivamsa* ('The Legend of Hari'), the style and character of its accompanying illustrations also embedding it within the Indo-Persianate tradition (Fig. 3D).

Akbar opened the floodgates: a wide range of texts were translated in the ensuing years, from stories and narratives to astronomical and mathematical treatises.[145] This also sparked parallel efforts by other members of

[143] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 456–7, for excerpts.
[144] Truschke, *Culture*, 101.
[145] Ibid, 101–41.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28.63.2

Fig. 3D Krishna and his Brother (Balarama) Fighting the Enemy, from the *Harivamsa* (watercolour and gold; Mughal artists; c. 1590–95)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 28.63.2

the imperial elite, among them Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan (1556–1627). He was son of Akbar's erstwhile regent, Bairam Khan, and an important patron of the arts in his own right.[146] He commissioned an illustrated version of the *Razmnama* (Fig. 3E). In the next century, Dara Shukoh (1615–59) sponsored an urgent translation of the Upanishads from Sanskrit to Persian as the *Sirr-i Akbar* ('The Great Secret'), having taken a broader interest in Hinduism.[147] Yet, his resulting proclamations about the original textual source of monotheism (i.e., a Vedic text) would be used against him just two years later in 1659, when he was captured, charged with heresy, and executed in the course of the war of succession fought against his brother, Aurangzeb.[148] Indeed, even in Akbar's court, the emperor's *accommodatio* was not universally esteemed. A high-ranking but embittered courtier, Abdul Qadir Badauni (1540–1605), helped translate the *Ramayana*, but would later become famous for penning and secreting away a chronicle, the *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* ('Selected Histories'), published to considerable notoriety after his death. A fairly orthodox if not hard-line Sunni, Badauni found the enterprise reprehensible and was sharply critical of Akbar's kingship in the *Muntakhab*.[149]

By the 1590s, the tensions with orthodox Sunnis of the prior decades had calmed, however, and Abu al-Fazl set about composing the *Akbarnama* ('Book of Akbar') and its companion, the *Ain-i Akbari* ('Institutes of Akbar'), through which he espoused Akbar's universal sovereignty.[150] In order to demonstrate Akbar's command over all aspects of Indian life, Truschke observes, Abu al-Fazl necessarily had to digest the Mughal court's forays into Sanskrit learning, which is both interlaced throughout the *Ain* and given explicit attention in two of its five constitutive books.[151] In these years and those that followed, some courtiers would marvel and others balk at such political claims, as well as those made by Akbar in commissioning works – the Persian *Ramayana*, not least – in which writers and artists more or less subtly presented Akbar as another incarnation of Vishnu and linked Mughal royal identity to that contained within the great Indian royal epic.[152]

For their part, Sanskrit intellectuals celebrated their relationship with the imperial court by writing panegyrics addressed to the emperor but also,

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[146] Ibid, 88–92, discusses the work of Sanskrit specialists for members of the wider imperial elite.

[147] Gandhi, 'The Prince'.

[148] Faruqui, 'Dara Shukoh'. Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 240–60, for documents pertaining to the war of succession.

[149] Truschke, *Culture*, 205–09, in which is outlined Badauni's grudging willingness to translate the text versus his reluctance to be complicit in the text's use to promote 'Akbar's vision of royal authority as transcending multiple religious traditions' (209).

[150] Truschke, *Culture*, 143.

[151] Ibid, 145–65.

[152] Ibid, 204–05

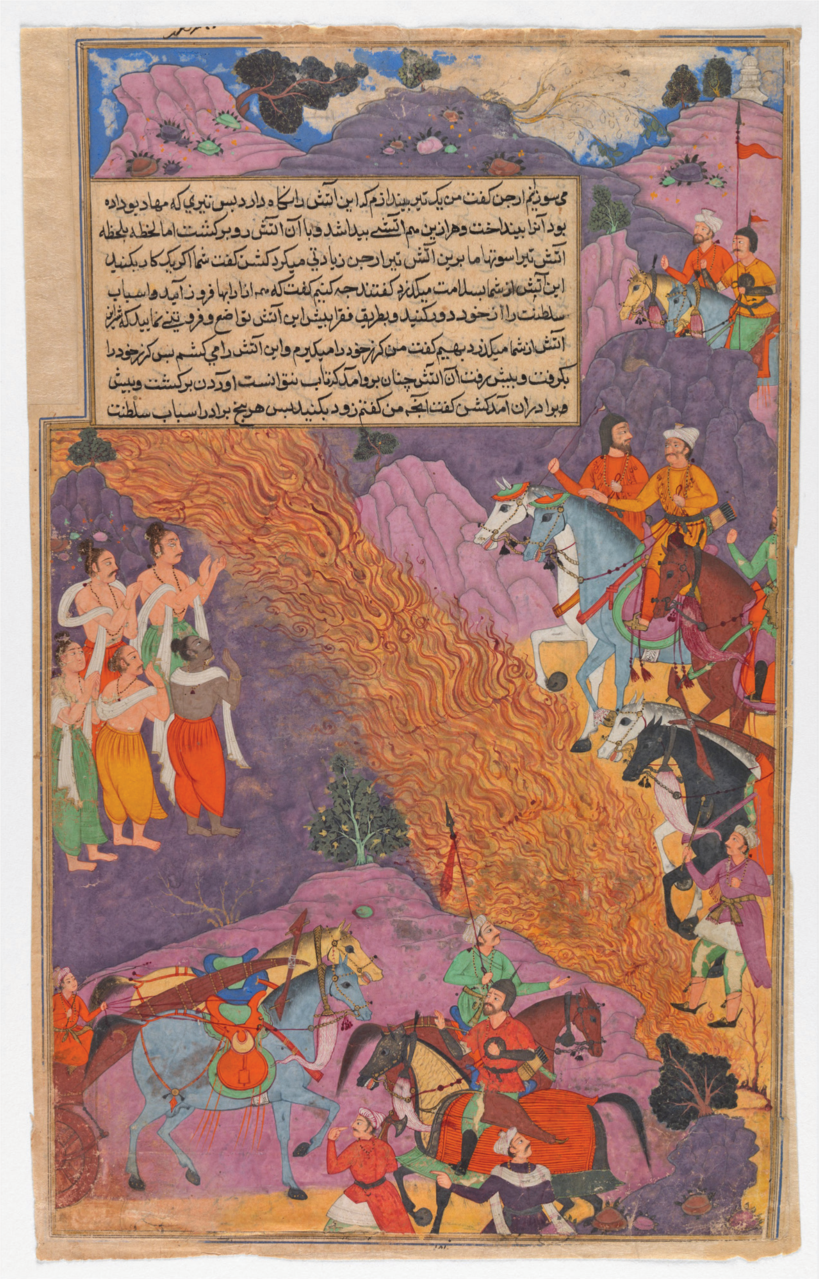

Fig. 3E Cosmic Fire Hurled at the Pandavas, from the *Razmnama* (watercolour and gold; Mughal artists; c. 1616–17)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 55.121.31

interestingly, by authoring works for their own communities in which favourable assessments of the Mughal imperium can be found.[153] Neither type of outpouring was premeditated as an outcome of these engagements and is all the more remarkable given that some were penned by Jains. Jain monks had entered the Mughal court in the 1560s and they partook in those dialogues described by Mubad Shah and in the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, yet a disagreement between Jahangir and the monk, Siddhichandra – who refused to renounce his asceticism and thus take a wife and an administrative post as the emperor demanded – led to his admonition and banishment from court. Although this harsh measure was short-lived, Jains shortly afterward fell from grace and were exiled from Mughal towns and cities, with Brahman scholars receiving the lion's share of imperial patronage in their stead. And yet, Siddhichandra and five other Jains wrote biographies favourable to the dynasty, many putting pen to paper long after Jains had lost favour at court – a windfall to Mughal kingship more durable than the Mughal-Jain interaction itself, in other words.[154] Mughal toleration, these events also signal, sometimes met its limits, even as very few were punished for their lifestyles and views, harshly or otherwise.

Aside from the kinds of works already described, Akbar and Jahangir both ordered the production of Sanskrit grammars of Persian, each accompanied by a bilingual (Sanskrit-Persian) lexicon: Vihari Krishnadasa's *Parasiprakasha* ('Light on Persian') of the late sixteenth century and Kavi Karnapura's *Sanskritaparasikapadaprakasha* ('Light on Sanskrit and Persian Words') of the early seventeenth. One influence was the 'deep link between philology and power in India, where grammatical correctness was integral to royal authority.'[155] Another was the existence of multiple Sanskrit-Persian lexicons from the fourteenth century onward that 'sought to make sense of the spread of Indo-Persian dynasties and culture through the tools of Sanskrit language analysis.'[156] By drawing on these traditions and deploying 'the intellectual resources of Sanskrit', therefore, the Mughals were able to advance 'their imperial ambitions and comment on the rapidly expanding Indo-Persian cultural order' within the Sanskrit intellectual ecumene.[157] By no means, it should be noted, were they the only Indo-Muslim dynasty to pursue such a project: the Ahmadnagar sultans' sponsorship of Sanskrit works was likewise linked to power but in a subtly different way – namely, as part 'of the conceit that they were actually Brahmins from Pathri.'[158]

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[153] Ibid, 65, 81–88.

[154] Ibid, 167–202. Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 107–23, for part of Siddhichandra's text. See, also: Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 20, on the similarity of Jain illustrated manuscripts and illustrated Persian codexes as an example of other cross-cultural, cross-linguistic exchanges.

[155] Truschke, *Culture*, 92.

[156] Ibid, 92–93.

[157] Ibid, 93, and 93–96 for further analysis.

3.3.4 Religious Toleration in the Mughal Empire

Was there a larger, ideological context to the enterprises just described? And, moving out of the rarefied and exclusive space of the court, were there implications for society at large? Placed in a global context, the Mughals do not seem to have been especially *intolerant*: there were neither institutions like the Inquisition nor restrictions upon entrance to further education or government service like those in parts of Europe.[159] On the contrary, Mughal *toleration* aroused admiration from Europeans, and not only those who were religious minorities in their homelands. Even men such as Sir Thomas Roe – a diplomat of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, who left a widely-cited account of the Mughal Empire – could see that Timurid rule stood favourably against the sectarian persecution and violence in his own nation.[160] Religious strife and persecution in Europe in fact continued long into the Enlightenment, 'when Europeans were *supposed* to be tolerant, and in genteel society toleration was celebrated, and demanded, as a hallmark of civilised behaviour.'[161]

Insofar as lofty Enlightenment ideas became embodied into a 'code of civility' that the everyman could comprehend and mimic, this process unfolded more or less quickly in cities versus towns and in different parts of Europe.[162] For their part, as rulers of a multi-ethnic empire from the fifteenth century, the Ottomans came to rely not on cultural codes or mores but on the law to incorporate diverse groups. Though not according them equal status to Sunni Muslims, Jews and Christians of various sects were given special dispensation to practice their religions and preserve their autonomy over certain community matters within their community or *millet*. This was not quite toleration so much as inclusion, and that through the definition and institutionalisation in the law of essential 'difference'.[163] As the bonds of inclusion so achieved wore thin in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so this sense of difference supported the 'growth of ethnicity' and its translation into the languages of nationalism, rupturing the Ottoman Empire.

From the 1580s, the Mughals took an approach looser and hence more fragile than the Ottomans. They embraced the notion of *sulh-i kull*, 'universal peace' or 'absolute peace' with all religions; translation of the *Mahabharata* and other works was part and parcel with this new ideology, code of civility, or ‘political theology’, as it has variously been described.[164] It had Mongol antecedents, an equivalent ‘discovered’ by Renaissance humanists, and hence a short-lived variant in the early Ottoman polity, while considerably pre-dating – as an idea and actual behavioural practice – the European codes engendered during the Enlightenment.[165] It encompassed, broadly speaking, ‘the balance and compromise necessary to maintain the stability and peaceableness of the social order within a ruler’s dominions’, Rajeev Kinra states, which ‘involved the promotion of intra-community harmony, even among different ethnic or sectarian categories of Muslims, just as much as it required the promotion of respect towards the non-Muslim other.’[166] In exercise of this absolute civility, the Mughals accommodated diverse groups within an expansive conception of ‘political Islam’, one more expansive than the Ottomans’ respect for the freedoms of Jews and Christians as *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book – that is, the Bible). In fact, by largely according the rights of Muslims and non-Muslims, the Mughals prefigured by almost three centuries the edicts of 1839 and 1856 that granted Jews and Christians such rights and freedoms in the Ottoman world.[167]

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[158] Sohoni, *Deccan Sultanate*, 60.
[159] Kinra, 'Handling', 260.
[160] Ibid, 255–59.
[161] Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 335, for citation, and 336–43.
[162] Ibid, 344–50.
[163] Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 92.

Rather than the whimsy of Akbar and one of his grandsons, Dara Shukoh, Kinra shows that *sulh-i kull* was part of Jahangir’s repertoire of power – hence, those night-time dialogues described in the opening of this chapter, as well as his interest in Indic languages. It also mattered to Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.[168] Kinra also strives to show, more significantly, that *sulh-i kull* percolated downward to the emperor’s representatives, whose careers often stretched over the wobbliness in kingship and kingly identity associated with regnal change, and who recognised the mundane benefits of toleration, such as the smooth functioning of commerce and the economic prosperity that resulted.[169] He does so by demonstrating the praise in Hindi poetry for men like Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, whose period of office extended from Akbar’s into Jahangir’s reign, while also drawing attention to the careers of Hindu secretaries like Chandar Bhan Brahman and Raghunath Ray Kayastha (d. 1664), whose careers reached into Aurangzeb’s reign and whose attitudes reflected the same respect for Islamicate cultures as their Mughal patrons showed for Indic ones.[170]

Sulh-i kull was an ideology, but in what sense? On the one hand, Akbar’s enterprise might be compared to a near-contemporaneous project commissioned by the staunchly Catholic monarch, Philip II of Spain: the publication of the Polyglot Bible (1569–73). Benito Arias Montano (1527–98), its editor, worked with Lutherans and other Protestants to provide texts in Hebrew and Aramaic, Greek and Latin that would appeal to Christians across confessional divides, thereby softening the divisions and stirring of religious-political opposition within the Habsburg domains. The project was also intended to help position its patron, Philip II, as *the* prince most interested in establishing *pietatis concordiae* ('religious harmony' – the project's motto), strengthening his own hand and, by extension, that of the Catholic Church (even though the Papacy was offended by, and rebuked him for, his efforts).[171] A copy of the Polyglot Bible was delivered to Akbar by the Jesuits in 1580, only a few years after its publication in Antwerp, its illustrations as much as its text inspiring developments in the Mughal court (§9.3.2).[172] An eschatological bent pervaded the thinking of both monarchs, framing their exploits, as we shall soon see.

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[164] For a recent, world historical survey of the concept and its deep origins, see: Moin, ‘Oath’.

[165] Casale, ‘Mehmed the Conqueror’.

[166] Kinra, ‘Handling’, 261.

[167] See, instructively: Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 109–53.

[168] Kinra, ‘Handling’, 261–74, and 280–88. Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 457–77, for Dara Shukoh’s writing that speaks of *sulh-i kull*.

[169] On this last point, see: Kinra, *Writing*, 113.

[170] Kinra, ‘Handling’, 274–80.

On the other hand, it bears remembering who the intended audience for the Sanskrit-Persian works was in Akbar's time. Their creation won the emperor some (self-serving?) praise from those Hindu and Jain communities connected with the translation enterprise, but this was not the immediate audience. The real audience was the ruling elite – the real lynchpins of the Mughals' power and authority – rather than society at large, differing in this respect from Philip II's new Bible edition. Translations of Sanskrit works into Persian helped reorient the Persophone world inhabited by the Mughal elite around the Indian subcontinent, which was especially valuable as the imperium continued to attract migrants from Iran and central Asia, while also offering up a wellspring of Indian beliefs and traditions for the fabrication of a distinct sovereign identity for the Mughals (§8.2).

A cynic might venture that Akbar and Jahangir's engagement with India's diverse communities and the creation of new knowledge had a more pragmatic purpose. Conquest was one thing; actual mastery over Indians meant 'knowing the country' and, reflexively, that Indians be able to comprehend their overlords. This might explain the accretion of Indian knowledge into the *Ain*, a text proclaiming the emperor's universal dominion, as well as the commissioning of bilingual grammars and lexicons. This also explains the structure of the new knowledge. Although the *Mahabharata*'s translators preserved many Sanskrit words, they also injected Persian poetry to provide a Persian courtly context for the work; Persian masters thereby advanced the language's hegemony over Sanskrit (see, however: §9.1). Although largely reproducing much of the text's theological framework, they also departed from it, variously replacing Brahma with the monotheistic Islamic God, placing Allah in equivalence with his Hindu counterparts, or suggesting that Hindu Gods were intermediaries between humans and Allah, for instance, thereby reconciling Sunni Islam with other faiths (and omitting what could not be accommodated, as Siddhichandra found out to his cost).[173] Although Akbar and Jahangir tried to move Sanskrit knowledge from the realm of the foreign to the familiar, therefore, one cannot ignore the possibility – as Edward Said put it – that ‘cultures tend to make representations of foreign cultures the better to master or in some way control them’.[174] Indian historians of the modern period have certainly been attentive to these very issues, examining the colonial state’s ‘ethnographic gaze’, the relationship between knowledge and power, and what Nicholas Dirks terms the ‘cultural construction of power’.[175]

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[171] Parker, *Imprudent King*, 88–89. See, also: Koch, 'Solomon', 284.

[172] Pye, 'Sufi Method', for a powerful recent analysis of *tahqiq* or 'verification' of divine truth, which lay at the heart of the engagement with different religious traditions and the policy of *sulh-i kull*, which is described, below.

If historians of early modern India have been uneasy about pursuing such avenues, the same cannot be said of the practitioners of the so-called New Qing History.[176] Qianlong (r. 1735–1796) was an important patron and was curious about his non-Han subjects in the imperial periphery, which was in the process of being conquered and incorporated during the Ten Great Campaigns era. Pamela Crossley and Evelyn Rawski, for instance, each highlight the influence of Confucian scholars, Jesuit missionaries, and the empire’s different minority cultures (Buddhist, Shamanic, and Muslim, pastoral and nomadic, to say nothing of so many ethno-linguistic groups) in the production of Qing imperial ideology and claims to universal sovereignty, as manifested in culturally-hybrid artistic and literary works.[177] Others have been attentive to the significance of the emperor commissioning dictionaries, botanical surveys, and new maps, seeing these in complement to the conquest and pacification of territory on the erstwhile imperial periphery; all were part of the exertion of Qing domination (§10.4). Cultural production was a means of articulating the Qing emperor’s embrace of his diverse subjects as befit a universal monarch, even as it bolstered the centre’s control over a multiethnic empire and helped sharpen the distinctiveness of Qing imperial identity.

Or, to put it a final way: did ideology seek to shape reality? In fact, the opposite was perhaps as accurate; *sulh-i kull* reflected the fragility of Mughal power, its dependence on the participation of a diverse range of powerholders, many of whom were able to preserve their autonomy vis-à-vis the ruling centre, and hence its inability to punish infidels let alone eradicate sectarian and confessional diversity. It would be wrong to dismiss it as Mughal gloss on the hollowness of imperial power, however. The moves made by Akbar in the 1580s involved reducing the power of the orthodox *ulama*, creating tensions that endured and intensified even after Akbar’s death, and risked the kind of dissent that spurred rebellion in the Gangetic region in the early part of the 1580s, suppression of which preoccupied the later part of Akbar’s reign.[178]

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[173] Truschke, *Culture*, 115–19.

[174] This observation is made by Truschke in *Culture*, 164, who cites Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*.

[175] Cohn, *Colonialism*; Dirks, *Castes*, for the ethnographic gaze; Dirks, *Hollow Crown*, 5, for citation.

[176] For an introduction to these developments in Qing history: Rawski, ‘Reenvisioning’.

[177] Crossley, *Manchus*; Rawski, *Last Emperors*.

[178] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 154.

These moves came, in other words, from a position or feeling of strength of a (limited) sort. It would also be wrong to see *sulh-i kull* as totally inconsequential to Indian society at large. Upon those rare occasions when the state did interfere with the religious lives and freedoms of its subjects, as Aurangzeb did by legislating the *jizya*, Indian community and political leaders were quick to remind the emperor of the 'peace with all religions'.[179] It would be wrong, moreover, to doubt the seriousness of *sulh-i kull*, overlooking what its progenitors believed and how this motivated those cross-cultural interactions and ideas developed in the 1580s, by looking only at the ideology in instrumental terms, at the same time ignoring how an abstract idea could become a behavioural practice, how something written about in a few imperial texts could become embodied by the elite in the course of a generation or so.[180] Because a key context to the projects of the 1580s was the coming of the Islamic millennium and the prospect it held for renewal under the leadership of a righteous king, this section concludes by examining the currency of these ideas and similar longings across the early modern world.

3.3.5 Anticipating Salvation

Prophesies relating to the long-awaited appearance of a messiah or of the End Times lay at the core of early modern Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thought. Being 'at once social, intellectual, and political', as one scholar notes, they 'constituted a cornerstone of public life'.[181] They were articulated in an experimental, inter-confessional milieu and in the context of inter-imperial rivalries among, most especially, the Habsburgs, Valois, Venetians, Ottomans, and Safavids as they 'fought their ideological and military battles for universal sovereignty' and for whom apocalyptic prophecies thus 'served as "building blocks" of early modern state formation'.[182] In anticipation of the closure of Islam's first millennium and the beginning of the second, millenarian thinking flowed like a steady and swelling stream from Islam's ninth century, the torrent enlarging toward the approach of the year 999 (1590/1 CE); hence the continued traction of a digest of Muslim apocalyptic lore composed by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bistami (d. 1454) that circulated widely in Ottoman courtly circles and eventually became absorbed into the court-sponsored legend of the Ottoman dynasty.[183] The hard years of the late Suleymanic era were about to tip into crisis with the onset of the Little Ice Age in the Ottoman Empire in the late sixteenth century, so it is easy to see the appeal of messianic ideas.[184] It was from the 'troubles of the Last Days', after all, that a renewer (*mujaddid*) or 'rightly-guided one' (*mahdi*) would deliver renovation (*tajdid*) that 'would compass religious and political institutions' and the 'establishment by conquest of a universal empire that would be literally as well as figurately millennial'.[185] More broadly, these ideas of a 'millennial kingdom' held promise from Morocco to the Mughal and Deccan kingdoms.[186]

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[179] See, here: Rajpurohit, 'Dadu Panth', 932–33, for details of a letter purportedly written by Shivaji to Aurangzeb. See, also: Moin, 'Oath', 729–30.

[180] Moin, 'Oath', 730.

[181] Green-Mercado, 'End Times', 1.

[182] Ibid, 2; Fleischer, 'Mediterranean Apocalypse', 19–20, and *passim*. The crossing between Jewish, on the one hand, and Muslim and Christian apocalyptic thought, on the other, is examined in: Goldish, 'Messianic Movements'.

[183] Fleischer, 'Mediterranean Apocalypse', especially 42–48. See, further: Flemming, *Essays*, 203–25.

In the Christian and Jewish world, millenarian or chiliastic ideas were not related to an impending millennium so much as a broader form of apocalyptic thinking drawn from the Old Testament, frequently linked to the belief that society was so corrupt as to be nearing its destruction, as variously propagated by such figures as Guillame Postel (a reader of al-Bistami's work), Menasseh ben Israel (d. 1657), Peter Serrarius (d. 1669), and countless others.[187] It was also common to look to events for signs or prognostications; thus, the *Reconquista* and expulsions of Jews and Muslims from Iberia were seen as an eschatological event, as were only so many victories (or defeats), while some Christians even saw the Safavid monarch, Ismail, as a messianic saviour.[188] Rather than being swept away by the 'discovery' of ancient wisdom and the intensification of knowledge production and exchange of which Renaissance humanism was but one part, or by the Reformation and the manifold currents of renewal, devotionalism, and anti-clericalism spreading across Eurasia, the proliferation of such thinking was nourished by these developments.[189] Frequently exhibiting a high degree of synchronicity or interconnectivity and intertextuality, the result was a tremendous upsurge in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim millenarian thought and activity across a great swathe of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Old World, yet also spreading to the New World, where Habsburg universal monarchy was nourished by the messianic theology of such Catholic missionaries as Gerónimo de Mendietta (1525–1604).[190]

What, then, was the impact of these highly prevalent beliefs on political authority? In a time when statecraft was 'not yet completely circumscribed by bureaucracy and protocol', as Huizinga observed, rulers could 'shirk convention at any time and seek their policy guidelines elsewhere'.[191] In western

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[184] White, *Climate of Rebellion*, especially 78–103, 126–62.

[185] Fleischer, 'Mediterranean Apocalypse', 19, for citation, and 46, for a synopsis of key elements of Muslim millennialist thought.

[186] Subrahmanyam, 'Turning', which seeks to break out of the Mediterranean of Charles V and Philip II's time of Fleischer's analysis.

[187] Goldish, 'Messianic Movements'; Fleischer, 'Mediterranean Apocalypse'. *C.f.* Phelan, *Millennial Kingdom*.

[188] Fleischer, 'Mediterranean Apocalypse', 31–32, 38–39; Subrahmanyam, 'Turning', 139–43.

[189] Bast, 'Messianic Kingship', 159. See, also: Gommans and Husseini, 'Neoplatonism'.

[190] Such melding even breached the boundaries of these three religious systems, as seen in the folding of Vishnu avatars into Muslim millenarianism in seventeenth-century India: Subrahmanyam, 'Turning', 152–54. Phelan, *Millennial Kingdom*, on Franciscan eschatology in Spanish America.

[191] Huizinga, *Autumntide*, 21.

Europe, we find fifteenth-century sovereigns seeking advice from such 'visionary ascetics and popular preachers' as Dennis the Carthusian, Vincent Ferrer, and Olivier Maillard.[192] In this context, temporal princes did not ignore highly prevalent ideas spouted by charismatic preachers about the End Times. On the contrary, they were highly susceptible to the power of such messages, often eager to absorb their influence. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (r. 1580–1612), for instance, ordered the construction of the new city of Hyderabad in the auspicious year of 1000 (1591 CE). Virtually every early modern monarch in Christendom entertained the claim that his was the throne of the last world empire.[193] Of them, however, the Habsburgs made the greatest use of this trope, some of the Habsburg monarchs – notably Maximilian (r. 1486–1519, as Holy Roman Emperor) or Philip II of Spain and its empire – actually imbibing this 'messianic mindset' to a greater degree, while influential constituencies outside the court also interpreted the conquest of the New World apocalyptically.[194] Such 'open embrace of the irrational in the form of dreams, prophesies and occult knowledge associated with the Middle Ages' was not, as already suggested, entirely at odds with early modern developments.[195]

The absorption of chiliastic ideas into dynastic ideology or modes of kingly self-presentation was one outcome (§8.3).[196] Yet another was to wield the language of apocalypticism to contest imperial authority, either by using it to highlight social and moral corruption under current government or by seizing upon popular enthusiasm for the appearance of a saviour to present oneself as the true king. Take, for example, Augustin Bader, who viewed the Habsburgs as the Antichrist. This was on account of their disinterest in the conversion of Jews and the persecution of Anabaptism, which he held as the true Creed. Becoming the leader of a small messianic movement in south Germany in the 1520s, Bader effectively turned Habsburg millenarianism on its head, using such ideas to counter their authority.[197] His and many other messianic movements were ephemeral, often precisely because their existence was damning enough for the ruling centre to take action. Here, the career of Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), sometime protégé of Abu al-Fazl, is instructive.[198] The experience of Akbar's court convinced Sirhindi of the emperor's digression from the true path of Islam; like others of the gentry class of *ulama* across north India, he feared a personal material loss connected to the spiritual loss to the community of Indian Muslims should the Mughal court continue down this road.

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[192] Ibid, 21.

[193] Bast, 'Messianic Kingship', 159–60; Wooding, *Tudor England*, 410.

[194] Bast, 'Messianic Kingship', 160–62; Parker, *Imprudent King*, 91–95; Phelan, *Millennial Kingdom*, here especially 16–28 and *passim*.

[195] The words are Rebecca Boone's in her study of Mercurino Gattinara, Grand Chancellor to Charles V, as cited in: Bast, 'Messianic Kingship', 158. On the competing claims of the Ottoman and Habsburg monarchs, see: Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 74–87.

[196] See, also: Bast, 'Messianic Kingship', 158–60.

[197] Ibid, 162–68.

[198] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 160–75, for a useful primary source.

Sirhindi became a leader of the Indian Naqshbandiya, writing hundreds of letters in guidance of lay disciples and imperial nobles, proclaiming himself the *mujaddid-i alf-i thani* ('renewer of the Second Millennium') in the 1590s, who would 'reverse the downward descent of Islam and the growing separation of the Prophet Muhammad from his community.'[199] Sirhindi was eventually hauled in front of Jahangir at an imperial audience in 1619 on charges of heresy, imprisoned for a year to cure him of his 'madness', thereafter returning to imperial favour to travel with the imperial camp on the tour of the Deccan.[200]

With the Islamic millennium at the forefront of popular consciousness, Ottoman imperial ideology was succoured by millenarian ideas even as the Ottoman world was destabilised by six major rebellions in central and southern Anatolia in the years 1511–38 alone, support for which was broad but largely rural (i.e., pastoralists, peasants, and members of the provincial cavalry).[201] In early modern England, the tumultuous swell came later. It was Elizabeth I's time on the throne that 'produced a small army of pseudo-Messiahs' – William Hacket (d. 1591), most infamously – before a peak in uncontrolled and somewhat anarchic prophecy in the Civil War era (1642–51).[202] Yet, not all movements posed such a problem to central authority. Consider the Mahdawiyah, founded by Saiyid Muhammad Jaunpuri (1443–1505), a Chishti *shaikh* from Jaunpur claiming to be the long-awaited *mahdi*. His supporters were not low-born and the movement was not a popular revolt; they were mostly drawn from the political and religious establishment and their target was the ills of that very establishment. As the movement evolved and quieted down, however, its followers – spread as they were through the domains of the Mughals and Deccan sultans – posed little threat and so it was largely absorbed.[203]

A different theory of cyclical time and renewal can be found in Indic political thought and was no less important to the articulation of political critique. This was the idea of the four *yugas* or eras, starting with the *satya* or *krita yuga* ('age of truth' or 'golden era'), through the *treta* and *duapara yugas* (silver and bronzes eras), and culminating in the *kali yuga* ('age of strife' or 'black era'), before the cycle is said to begin anew. Passage through the *yugas* was marked by the successive decline of *dharma* in the sense of moral order or righteousness. Prevalent by the medieval and early modern eras was the view that the world had entered the *kali yuga*. 'Much of the evil around could be explained in terms of the *kali yuga*,' J.S. Grewal notes, but the meaning of evil varied according to the changing times.[204] By the eleventh century, one of the first Muslim scholars to engage at length with Hinduism, al-Biruni (973–c.1070), wrote in his monumental *Tarikh-i Hind* ('History of India') that the era was associated with the abolition of the four *varnas* and the Brahmans' loss of dignity (§2.1.2), the proliferation of sects and the destruction of temples, oppression by rulers and rebellion by the weak against the great.[205] Indeed, those Brahmans who declined participation in Shivaji's coronation did so on the grounds of their belief that the world had entered the *kali yuga* – an epoch so corrupted that the *varna* order had ceased to exist, entailing the absence of true *kshatriyas* (warrior castes, and hence kings).[206] In such belief was also an opportunity, for Brahmans filled the void as the self-appointed upholders of caste order, while their assemblies acted to resolve caste disputes.[207] Finally, it was this same belief of the *kali yuga* being nigh that animated Sikh thought, too, evidence of which can be found in the *Dasam Granth* and numerous other texts.[208]

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[199] Richards, *Mughal*, 99.

[200] Ibid, 98–100.

[201] Fleischer, 'Mediterranean Apocalypse', 56. For a survey of millenarianism in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires, see: Blake, *Time*, 141–73.

[202] Thomas, *Religion*, citations 133 and 149, respectively, and 132–46 for discussion of English messianism.

[203] MacLean, 'Mahdawiyah'. See, also: Subrahmanyam, 'Turning', 146–48.

[204] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 22.

3.4 Conclusion

Our beliefs not only dictate the mundane rhythms and confines of daily life; they also frame our response to the sudden appearance of existential threats, be it the approach of a conquering army from distant lands or the arrival of a radical preacher espousing a vision of casteless society. They might be gradually modified in response to the absorption of new ideas or else accommodate old and new side-by-side, as we have seen in this and the previous chapter, but also come to reflect wide-ranging or deep changes in the very structures within which we live. Even in our largely secular times, the appearance of Extinction Rebellion prophets, or a messiah such as George Monbiot or Greta Thunberg can stir global, grass-roots, and large-scale collective action and initiative into being. Environmental change is, and perhaps always has been, a cause of changes in the content, character, or fervency of faith and devotion. Throughout history, religious ideas like the Apocalypse, the coming of the millennium, or impending Judgement have been used to make sense of climate convulsions.[209] One acute and incredibly bleak period of cooling and crisis lasted for about a half-century from 1560, roughly mapping such phenomena as the reigniting of the European witch craze and the Calvinist Revolution, the latter marking the evolution and survival (rather than the outbreak) of the larger Protestant Revolution.[210]

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[205] Ibid, 22. For a contextual sketch of Muslim scholarly interest in Hinduism, see: Faruqui, 'Dara Shikoh', 35–42.

[206] O'Hanlon, 'Social Worth'.

[207] O'Hanlon *et al*, 'Discourses'. See, also: O'Hanlon, 'Speaking from Siva's Temple',

[208] See, for example: Rinehart, *Dasam Granth*, 53–56.

[209] Jenkins, *Climate, Catastrophe, and Faith*, 2.

[210] Ibid, 90–108.

The early modern period was roughly coterminous with the Little Ice Age (§1.2.1), of which the turbulent decades from the 1560s marked but one episode.[211] Another distinct phase is discernible in the mid-seventeenth century, when climatic catastrophe plunged many parts of the world into crisis. Apocalyptic thought flourished in this context; it is no surprise that there was a millenarian upsurge in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[212] In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, a final upheaval was linked to the flurry of evangelical, revivalist religious movements that led to the 'Great Awakening' in north America, which has been compared to the kind of devotion earlier espoused by Bhakti cults.[213] Yet, this was also a critical moment for the development of new regional patriotisms closely linked to religious belief in south Asia, many of a liberationist character (e.g., the Sikhs in Punjab).[214] We might be critical about shoehorning Indian developments into an analysis that is tentative at best, crude at worst, and somewhat Eurocentric in spite of the globalist overtures of recent scholarship. This is a moot point, however, for Indian historians have hardly linked changes in belief or particular ideas to structural factors at the macro-regional or global level. This book is as much about examining points of convergence and divergence in historical experience as it is about presenting hypotheses for further inquiry.

To conclude, it is worth prospecting to the next two chapters, linking these to what people believed while also beginning to tease out, reflexively, the impact of structural factors on the development of personal and collective beliefs. There may not have been an intrinsic 'spirit of capitalism', as Max Weber postulated, but the marketisation of more and more economic activity – particularly from the sixteenth century – *did* shape a 'market culture' dictating the lives of most people and navigated by them on a daily basis. Growing population stoked inflationary pressure, with the rise in prices an incentive to cultivators and manufacturers to increase output, though these effects may have been milder in some parts of the world, for inflation was negligible in places like south Asia.[215] 'Commercial society' was nevertheless coming into being in numerous locales across the early modern world, to which we shall return in Chapter 4.

Crucially, this productive expansion generally outpaced monetary expansion, so that the early moderns frequently had to rely on credit, thereby imbricating themselves in chains of credit/debt obligations. These linked hundreds or even thousands of individuals and households, for everyone owed someone else, as accounts were seldom settled in cash, and because ready coin was fairly limited despite steady monetisation. In this respect, market relations – buying and selling – were deeply personal and social, a different but crucial part of early modern sociability explored elsewhere in this book. It required trust and a reputation for reliability or fairness and justice; this meant contemporaries in England, for instance, combined classical and Christian notions to 'describe the ethical human relationships involved in the "serial sociability" of the culture of credit.'[216] It also meant a weight in religious and ethical discourse was placed not on the pursuit of personal advancement or wealth and worldly goods, but on preventing social decline, for chasing a single debtor or failing to pay even one creditor could create a domino effect that toppled household after household.[217]

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[211] Ibid, 29–30, 61–62, on the variable length of the Little Ice Age in the historiography, which is either elongated to the fourteenth to early nineteenth century or contracted to the late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries, thereby either book-ending or being nested within the early modern era.

[212] On the relationship to apocalyptic thought: ibid, 116–19. See, also: Parker, *Global Crisis*.

[213] Hawley, *Storm*, 2.

[214] Jenkins, *Climate, Catastrophe, and Faith*, 138–58. On the latter, see: Bayly, 'Pre-History'.

[215] Moosvi, *People*, 35–80.

The social character of production and exchange persisted through the early modern period, even as it was slowly changing under the surface because of the spread of market relations. Our data for pre-colonial India on key trends (e.g., on prices, wages, and inflation, as well as population and demography) are very limited, so it is more difficult to articulate the precise mechanics of market expansion, let alone convincingly link these to any ascertainable change in dispositions, ethical values, cultural norms, and social relations. Yet, we can discern a comparable penetration of the market into society that was deeper than before, ushering the advent of a commercial society in India as in the larger Islamic world, other parts of Asia, and in Europe. In India, too, cultivators relied on rural financiers through each harvest cycle, artisans worked in fulfilment of advances made by creditors, soldiers were frequently paid in arrears and relied on moneylenders who travelled with the war-camp in the interim, and, eventually, regional potentates and warrior-kings forged close relationships with bankers out of necessity (on this last, see: §5.4.4). These facts and comparisons call for us to write social histories of the market, money, and credit in early modern India, where we might look to the complaints of urbanites or the work of official censors, magistrates, and others tasked with the regulation of the market or upholding fairness and justice in transactions to do so.

How, we might also ask, did what people believe frame or else come to be reshaped by the advent of far deeper and wider commercialisation in India? How did people cultivate and signal those qualities and make manifest those ethical values underpinning 'commercial society'?[218] Here we might return to where we started our exploration of faith and religious belief: Nanak and the early Sikh *panth*. The Khatri caste pre-dated the advent of Sikhism; Nanak was born into a Khatri family in imperial service, after all. The attraction of Khatris to Nanak's *panth* requires some explanation. True, all of Nanak's successors were Khatris involved in trade, but the 'conversion' of Angad and Amar Das to Sikhism – the former having been a Durga *pujari* (worshipper), the latter a devout Vaishnava – is all the more confounding when we consider their social status, let alone broach why other elites might have followed the Sikh creed.[219] This is because Sikh thought was not far from 'Sant *bhakti* of the *nirguna* strand, associated with poets such as Kabir, Ravidas and Dadu Dyal,' whose relatively lowly social backgrounds shaped their anti-establishment themes and their fervent critique of 'the corruption and contradictions of Brahmans', other holy men, and kings.[220] Sikh literature reveals that early 'Sikhism was in many respects a mercantile *bhakti* religion', Hardip Singh Syan argues, insofar as a significant proportion of followers were discernibly of the Khatri caste and lived in those north Indian entrepôts into which Khatris had been migrating in late medieval and early modern times.[221] Shadowing this migration, Sikhism's own spread must have been linked to the needs of a community whose commercial operations – from retail to banking – integrated 'Kabul, Lahore, Sirhind, Thanesar, Delhi, Agra, Gwalior, Lucknow, Allahabad, Fatehpur, Jaunpur, Patna and Dhaka'.[222]

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[216] Muldrew, *Obligations*, 146, for citation, and 123–47.

[217] Ibid, 148–95, 272–312, for a considerably more complex analysis than can be summarised here.

[218] See, also: Bayly, *Rulers*, 168–73.

Sikh literature is replete with mercantile metaphors and themes. Whereas much *bhakti* poetry expresses the relationship of a devotee to her lord as like that of a courtier to his king, the gurus' compositions recast this bond as a client relationship akin to that of a merchant with his banker.[223] Sikh *bhakti* is also frequently allegorised as an entrepreneurial task. 'In early Sikh thought, the Sikh guru was not depicted as an average *Sant* guru,' but as 'a teacher who would protect the material welfare of his Sikhs irrespective of the wider economic climate.'[224] In these ways, the scriptures reconciled devotion with a commercial spirit, even as they reminded merchants of the illusion of wealth hiding 'the predatory presence of death.'[225]

If this helps explain Sikhism's appeal to Khatris, other sources reveal the role of Khatri mercantile families in leading and coordinating *sangats* (congregations) outside Punjab, not least the *hukumnama*s (letters of command) sent by the Sikh gurus to these communities spread across north India from around the early seventeenth century.[226] These documents reveal that the Khatris were sent instructions and entrusted to provide *sewa* (service) to these *sangats*, as well as to send donations back to the gurus, in return for which their *rozgar* (business) would be protected and maintained. By the late eighteenth century, 'the extensive chain of north Indian *sangats* gave the Sikh gurus a valuable network of goods and services to finance their courts and projects.'[227] The

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[219] Syan, 'Merchant Gurus', 307, 310–11.
[220] Ibid, 307.
[221] Ibid, 308, 312.
[222] Ibid, 312.
[223] Ibid, 315–19.
[224] Ibid, 328.
[225] Ibid, 320.
[226] Ibid, 308, 321–27.
[227] Ibid, 326,

sangat in east Bengal was even requested to send a war elephant, for example.[228] By the eighteenth century, in testament both to problems afflicting the gurus' courier (*masand*) system and the prominence of Khatris as leaders of *sangats* and as creditworthy and well-trusted agents in north India's credit and banking networks, monetary transfers were made by the use of bills of exchange (*hundis*) (§5.3.1).

The urban dimension is worth highlighting. *Bhakti* devotionalism, Sufi Islam, and Sikhism had an impact that was highly diffuse, yet their leaders often targeted communities – whether relatively elite, like the Khatris, or those lowlier artisans who flocked around Kabir – found in towns and cities.[229] The Khatris became important patrons of Sikh temples and institutions as leaders of north Indian *sangats*, much as those militarised Vishnu – and Shiva-worshipping ascetics (*bairagis*, *gosains*, *sannyasis*) used the proceeds from the sale of their services to Hindu and Muslim dynasts to invest in north India's burgeoning commercial centres.[230] Towns and cities became important nodes of religious networks, themselves imbricated in networks of trade, banking, and imperial administration via the agency of Khatris and Kayasthas (§7.2.3) or because festivals and seasonal fairs (*melas*) had historically grown up around pilgrimage centres like Haridwar, while religious actors and institutions were widely and often consciously entangled in commerce and (urban) politics.[231]

Alongside the largesse amassed via Sufi *dargahs* like Nizam al-din Awliya's in Delhi or at Hindu temples, there was the impact of a new and highly performative style of early modern kingship that made a public spectacle of pilgrimage (§8.2–§8.3), at the same time giving religious itineraries a new prominence and resulting in large beneficences at such centres as Ajmer or Banaras, transforming their townscapes. Among the newly empowered warrior lineages like the Marathas, the sponsorship of regional pilgrimage cycles to the most venerable *tirthas* or holy places across India – namely, Kashi/Banaras, Prayag/Allahabad, and Gaya – from the sixteenth century onwards was critically linked to the process of state building and expansion.[232] If the pressures unleashed by the Reformation and confessionalisation and, later, by secularisation upon urban culture in Europe were largely absent in south Asia, there were numerous respects in which developments were more comparable.[233] It is thus to towns and cities that the next chapter turns.

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[228] Ibid, 326,

[229] Malekandathil, 'Introduction', 9–10.

[230] Bayly, *Caste*, 73.

[231] Dale, 'Empires and Emporia'. Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 80–82, for details of major north Indian *melas*.

[232] For a survey focussing on south India: Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 47–63.

[233] See: Clark, ed., *European Cities and Towns*, 177–99.

4 Urbanism

A decade into his reign, Shah Jahan began to grow restless for a new capital. Agra had been the seat of Mughal rule for the better part of the past forty years, its connection to the Mughal dynasty older still.[1] Babur had laid out a Persianate garden, Akbar replaced the old Badalgarh fort with a new palace-fortress (Fig. 4A), and Shah Jahan had lately commissioned the spectacular riverside funerary complex – the Taj Mahal – following the death of his beloved first wife, Mumtaz, in 1632. Meanwhile, Mughal noblemen had purchased plots on both of the Yamuna's banks and laid out their own mansions and gardens.[2] Agra was not without beauty or splendour and its place in the history of Mughal rule was deepening, therefore, but the river presented risk in the form of flood damage or the erosion of structural foundations, while the consequence of successive building projects within the city was to create an unruly hodgepodge. Shah Jahan was a connoisseur of architecture and longed for a place to construct a city that not only projected Mughal imperialism, but also produced the perfect order. Summoning his architects and astrologers, therefore, he asked them to discern the most auspicious site for a new capital and the precise day, hour, and second the first slab should be laid.[3] They chose a site currently out of use but in a place with such an accumulated host of advantages, that it had served as a capital city for successive Indian and Indo-Muslim dynasties for hundreds of years: Delhi.

Delhi lies within a region roughly enclosed by the Sutlej and the Yamuna, at the nexus of the Indus and Ganges systems and of the dryer northwest and the humidity of Bengal – a gateway between two different worlds that afforded the site military and economic advantages (§6.3). Different parts of the huge expanse known as Delhi were associated with its successive rulers, such as the tombs of the Lodi sultans (just southwest of the modern monument, India Gate), but the last major complex of the Sultanate era within the larger city was the Tughluq capital of Firuzabad, begun in 1354.[4] The government of the later

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[1] Koch, 'Agra', for a rich and concise survey. Koch, *Taj Mahal*, offers greater detail.

[2] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 184–87.

[3] Ibid, 27–29.

[4] Ibid, 9–12.

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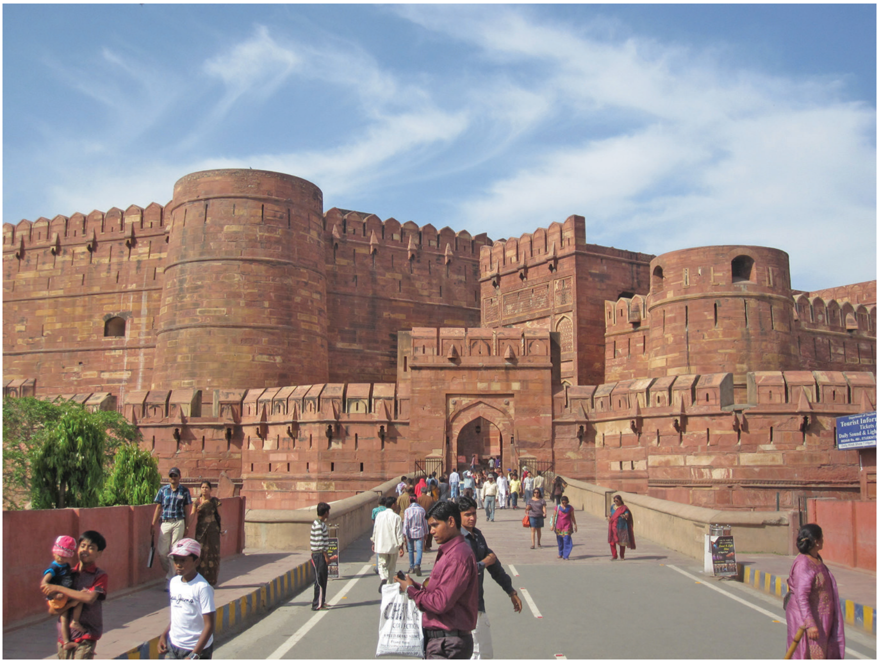

Fig. 4A Agra Fort's Ramparts

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

Delhi Sultanates remained in the city after Timur's invasion, even though it left Delhi a 'burnt-out shell'.[5] Despite remaining a prize eyed and won by Babur, the first four generations of Mughal rule did not stimulate building works to definitively leave the dynasty's mark on the city's urban fabric, let alone make it *the* Mughal capital.[6] This was due to a combination of such factors as the interregnum in Humayun's reign and Akbar's strategic decisions to shift the centre of Mughal rule sequentially to other sites (to Agra, in 1565–71 and 1598–1648, to Fatehpur Sikri, in 1571–85, and to Lahore, in 1585–98) – decisions that seem less peculiar when we remember that the Safavid and Ottoman thrones were also repeatedly relocated.[7]

Situated on a bluff beside the Yamuna in a northern part of Delhi, the emperor's new city would be known as Shahjahanabad (the Abode of Shah Jahan), one of its centrepieces – the 'Qila Mubarak' (Auspicious Fortress) – constructed of imposing red sandstone on a prime riverside spot (Fig. 4B).[8] Work began in haste in 1638. Princes and noblemen were granted land for their own mansions and were expected to ensure labourers broke ground and began construction without delay.[9] Prominent and wealthy women also had a role in giving form to space within the city confines.[10] Among the most significant were Nawab Akbarabadi Begum, who created one of the city's most important bazaars, and Princess Jahanara, the emperor's eldest daughter, who held the title of *padshah begum* (the most senior woman in the imperial harem and head of the imperial household). She possessed a vast fortune amassed from sources fairly typical for a Mughal noblewoman: gifts, inheritance, and investments plus the income from her *jagir* and such sources as toll collection.[11]

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[5] Hambly, 'Tughluqid Delhi', especially 51–54.

[6] There were Mughal constructions in Delhi before Shah Jahan's time, a notable example being Humayun's Tomb; see: §8.3.

[7] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 12. Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 90, on this last point.

Leading from the palace-fortresses' Lahori Gate all the way to the Fatehpuri Masjid was a 40-foot-wide thoroughfare constructed in 1650 at Jahanara's instruction; it was the main axis of the city and, by extension, the empire. The Nahr-i Bihisht (Paradise Canal) flowed all the way down its middle, watering shade-giving trees, while each side of the boulevard was lined with shops. The entire length was known to contemporaries as a bazaar but was also punctuated at intervals by *chawks* (squares) that each catered to particular needs or groups like specialist marketplaces found in towns and cities across the early modern world. Construction of the octagonal space known as Chandni Chawk (Moonlight Square) was sponsored by Jahanara, as were the surrounding caravanserai, bathhouse, and garden. Its name derives from the reflective pool at its centre that shone in the moonlight, yet also became a part of the city dwellers' fondness for wordplay – on the Hindustani word for silver (*chandi*), in this case, since jewellers and moneychangers were also located here. Its fame was such that the entire boulevard became known as Chandni Chawk (Fig. 4C), a usage that survives to this day. In this vast stretch, one could buy kebabs and sweetmeats, gems and perfumes, household pets and quadrupeds, one could find moneychangers and astrologers or cures for coughs, syphilis, and impotence, and one could stop at coffeehouses, at wine shops, and at other places to hear news.[12]

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[8] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 36–44, for a detailed description of its construction, spatial organisation, and how spaces were used. Its other names were the *Urdu-i mu'alla* (Exalted Camp) or *Qila-i mu'alla* (Exalted Fort). For a useful plan of the primary structures within the walled city, before the noble mansions were built: Noe, 'Morphological Survey', 242.

Mughal palaces, funerary complexes, and gardens in Agra, Lahore, and Delhi formed prototypes for those raised in the Deccan following the Mughals' gradual southward expansion and contrasted with those of the Bahmani and Deccan Sultanates eras, a rich visual survey of which is offered by Michell and Philon, *Islamic Architecture*, 47, 67, and *passim*.

[9] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 30–31. Only juvenile princes lived within the confines of the Qila Mubarak complex.

[10] Dadlani, *From Stone*, 70, for the mosques sponsored by wives of Shah Jahan, such as the Fatehpuri Masjid and the Akbarabadi Masjid.

[11] Findly, 'Mughal Women', for an excellent guide to the sources of income and kinds of investments made by a number of prominent women.

[12] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 55–56, 116–20.

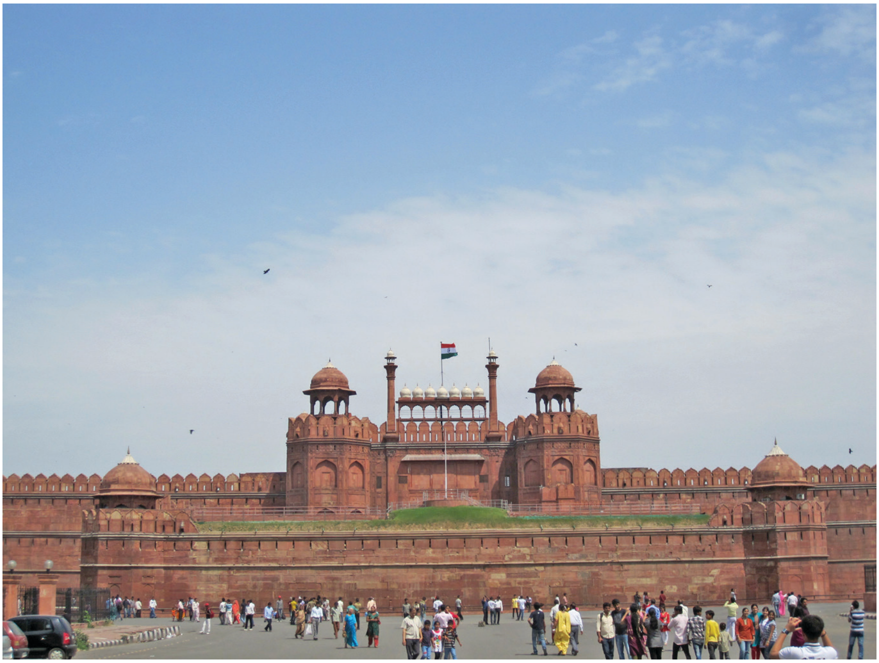

Fig. 4B The Qila Mubarak, Viewed from Top of Chandni Chowk

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

Seventeenth-century Mughal writers praised Shahjahanabad and claimed it overshadowed the Ottoman capital at Istanbul in size and scale, although their commentary should be taken with a pinch of salt.[13] Its significance in the history of the Mughal dynasty means there is far more material on Shahjahanabad than other Indian cities but, by the same turn, its history is hardly representative of the variety of urban centres found across India. It anchors this chapter's exploration of the place of towns and cities in the experience of early modernity, therefore, but with an appreciation of the diversity of urban spaces and lifeways across the Indian subcontinent and around the globe. Indeed, a crucial caveat to this chapter concerns the very importance of towns and cities relative to the countryside. 'Cities were islands in a rural sea', notes the historian, Peter Burke.[14] Cities and towns were home to a very small proportion of the world's population in the premodern period, being also smaller in size and fewer in number than in c. 1800, at the tail end of the period surveyed in this book. Only in 2008, in fact, did the proportion of the world's urban population outweigh

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[13] Ibid, 192–93.

[14] Burke, 'Patterns', 108.

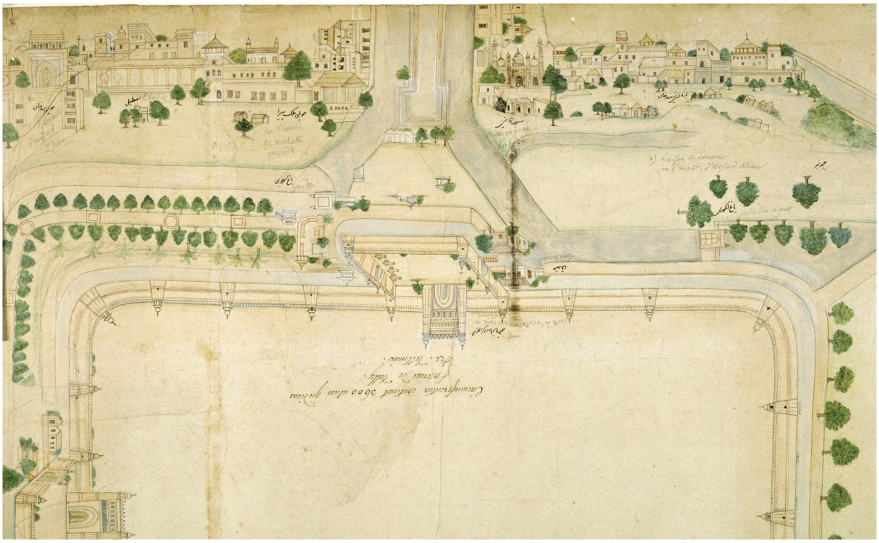

Fig. 4C Street Plan of Chandni Chowk (watercolour with Persian annotations in ink and French translations in pencil; Indian artist; c. 1770s)

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London, AL.1762

that of the countryside.[15] Yet, this should neither distract us from an important phase of urbanisation underway in the early modern period by which the population, size, and complexity of urban centres increased, nor should it negate the relative significance – economic, cultural, religious, political, ideological, intellectual – of urban space, the built environment, and its inhabitants.

What kinds of urban centres could be found in early modern India? Why did they exist and in what relation to one another or to larger structures like empires? Were some or all of these growing in size and/or number in this period? Who owned urban land or held responsibility for the urban fabric? Who lived in cities? Why did they do so? Where and how did they live? Were social relations harmonious and how was conflict or unrest dealt with? How did the residence of different groups give form to the city as a physical place but also within the imagination? How, reflexively, did people experience the city? What opportunities did the city afford for work and play, by day and at night? What about the dangers? But, above all, did this produce a distinctly urban identity or subjectivity? And can it be called 'early modern'? This chapter is guided by these questions, the first section of which sketches the broad pattern of urbanisation in the long term with attention to the relationship of towns to the countryside, the variegated experience of urban growth and change, and the variety of urban spaces. The remainder of the chapter considers the impact of such urbanisation by delving into town and city life.

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[15] Clark, 'Introduction', 1.

4.1 Urbanisation

4.1.1 Global Trends

Following three or four centuries of steady urbanisation, the rate of growth stagnated or even declined with scarcely any new urban centres established in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The causes were numerous and their impacts were unevenly distributed: places at greater remove from era-defining pandemics, the political instability of the post-Mongol period, and economic volatility and precarity managed to buck the downward trend (e.g., Japan and the Mayan, Inca, and Aztec empires).[16] Over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European cities recovered from the worst effects of the Black Death, their populations steadily growing before stabilising in the seventeenth century.[17] Over the later eighteenth century, a warming climate and an 'agricultural revolution' meant more food – nourishment that helped renew population expansion – although the instability of the decades of the General Crisis combined with epidemic disease and extensive warfare until c. 1815 to check urbanisation.[18]

This picture more or less extends to other parts of Afro-Eurasia, with an urban revival attributable to the resumption of agrarian expansion and commercialisation, as well as globalisation and imperial expansion, whether of colonial empires like Spain's or Britain's, or imperial states like those ruled by the Ottoman and Mughal dynasts. Thus, large cities burgeoned, many new towns were established and thrived, and market towns and periodic centres also proliferated. The eighteenth century saw strong urban growth sustained in some places (the Ottoman provinces and Japan, for example), redistribution between larger and smaller centres elsewhere (the heartland of the Mughal Empire), and a slanting of urban growth away from interiors and toward the maritime rimlands of continents (as in west Africa and much of the Indian Ocean world), although this last trajectory was perhaps of longer standing and merely more appreciable – if not actually amplified – after c. 1700.[19]

What is canvased by these trends? A strong start in many regions gave way to a more variegated picture across the later early modern world, so that urbanisation can hardly be said to be a *consistent* feature of the early modern experience in all parts of the globe.[20] Add to this that neither the essential layout of many existing cities nor the drivers or character of urbanisation was radically new, unlike in the medieval and modern periods.[21] Unfolding in conjunction with the steady envelopment of economic activity by the relations of market exchange, which entered a new stage even if not wholly novel, we can thus speak of the early modern phase of urbanisation as a maturation and consolidation. That said, certain dimensions of early modern urbanisation and urban life were by degrees distinctive: new or evolving ideas about the ideal city; the influence of such ideas upon the layout of new or existing towns and cities or upon the use of urban spaces; and the flowering of civic identities and urban cultures. This we may call the lived experience of urban spaces, an urban subjectivity, or more simply denote it as urbanism.

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[16] Ibid, 9–10.

[17] Except England, which continued to urbanise in the long seventeenth century.

[18] Burke, 'Patterns', 119–20.

[19] Clark, 'Introduction', 10–11.

What of India? The layout of new capitals and town-building under royal or aristocratic patronage was not a uniquely Muslim phenomenon but was certainly a recurrent feature of the history of Indo-Muslim states. Towns emerged or grew more organically as part of a phase of urbanisation traceable to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, if not earlier.[22] Then, from the seventeenth century, there was not a radical break so much as a palpable uptick in the pace of urbanisation, plus a moderate change in the character of some cities. The latter was due to factors ranging from new ideas about how to affect the virtuous life through the urban fabric, to new styles of kingly performance flowering across the early modern world. The latter, it might be noted, necessitated urban plans – and permanent or temporary structures, such as gateways – conducive to such spectacles as the royal entry into capitals as different as Florence, Vienna, Paris, Madrid, Istanbul, Moscow, and Shahjahanabad, or the processions for the sixtieth birthday of the Kangxi emperor held in Beijing and the funeral of Elizabeth I in London.[23]

Indian urbanisation thus seems to have been linked to those larger processes – such as commercialisation and globalisation – that were more rapidly gaining ground after about c. 1650 or even c. 1600 and left their imprint on state, society, and economy in manifold ways, as we shall see. Indeed, the size and number or frequency by which towns appeared on the Indian landscape, as well as their tendency toward merging into something approaching a conurbation, seems to have been most pronounced in the agrarian heartland of empire in the Indo-Gangetic region and in the settlements and ports of peninsular India oriented toward intra-Asian and Euro-Asian trade.[24]

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[20] See, further: Clark, *European Cities*, 109–37, for a rich survey of the ebb and flow in Europe, c.1500–c.1800.

[21] On the overlaying of new buildings on existing urban layouts, and the replacement of older structures – such as walls and gates – with new variants, see: Blondé and Van Damme, 'Early Modern Europe', 241.

[22] The idea of a Ghurid-era 'urban revolution' that continued into the Delhi Sultanate period originated in an essay by Mohammad Habib published in 1952, although the interpretation was soon critiqued by Irfan Habib and others, with evidence of an even deeper beginning of this phase of urbanisation compiled by yet other scholars; see: Malekandathil, 'Introduction', 5–6; Asher and Talbot, *India*, 57, 93–96.

[23] Mulryne *et al*, *Architectures of Festival*; Burke, 'Culture', 442–43; Lincoln, *London*, 1–4. This being said, festivity surrounding royal entries and kingly movement linked early modern culture to the late medieval past, as so clearly shown by Ruiz in *King Travels*, especially 68–145.

4.1.2 Urban Centres and Economic Life

Urbanisation was deeply intwined with the economic transitions that bridged the late Middle Ages with the early modern period.[25] Scholars of the European past, among them Max Weber, Henri Pirenne, and Fernand Braudel, viewed the city as the fountainhead or harbinger of capitalism and modernity in a largely feudal and 'backward' landscape.[26] By contrast, Robert Brenner criticised such ideas, proposing – less favourably – the view of cities as parasites that thwarted the countryside's economic transformation. Both sets of approaches separate town and countryside rather sharply, something more recent scholarship on Europe and China has sought to nuance while unsaddling urbanisation from the notional process of 'modernisation'.[27] A centrepiece of research in this direction of the past twenty years or so has been the small town, as opposed to cities and major maritime ports. Small towns often mediated between the countryside and the larger centres while also serving as hubs of capital and loci of proto-industrialisation. They grew rapidly to c. 1650 or c. 1700, their expansion checked toward the end of our period by explosive city growth. Where they served specialist functions and were connected to new transport infrastructure, however, some small towns could avoid being cannibalised and some even continued to flourish.[28]

Indian historians have long described the life and anatomy of particular cities, but they have not been so interested in urban history *per se* until relatively recently, so these newer conceptions of rural-urban relations and of the role of towns and cities are only beginning to appear in the historiography.[29] Irfan Habib's scholarship remains a crucial reference point for those interested in towns and cities, for example, but his analysis bears the imprint of older ideas (e.g., Brenner's). Habib considered the dynamism of urban places marginal and thus insignificant, yet fixed on the exploitative character of the urban-rural relationship, so that urbanisation represented a parasitic development spurred by a feudal regime (the Mughal state).[30] By contrast, Rajat Datta has lately homed-in on *qasbahs* to paint a fresh portrait of early modern Indian urbanisation. These were small(ish) towns and marketing centres constitutive of a 'rural-urban continuum', Datta argues, for their inhabitants consumed the foodstuffs and manufactures of villages, thanks largely to those merchants whose operations interwove rural supply with urban demand.[31] In some cases, *mahajans* – so often seen as creatures of the town – did not merely provide a rural-urban nexus through their extension of credit to rural cultivators and urban artisans, but were involved directly in farming and running shops in *qasbahs* selling the productions of the village oilseed or sugarcane press or its *gur* (jaggery) manufactory.[32] The growth of *qasbahs* continued much longer and they fared much better than small towns in Europe, as we shall see, below. This had something to do with the so-called 'portfolio capitalists', the sale of tax farms to military and mercantile specialists, and the acquisition of rural real estate by Banias (§5.4.2–§5.4.4).[33]

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[24] Sharma, 'The City', 29–31.

[25] Blondé and Van Damme, 'Early Modern Europe', 245–50, on rural-urban transfers as drivers of urbanisation. Comparably, see: Malekandathil, 'Introduction', 9–10, on the role of *iqtadars* (§7.1.2) in facilitating rural-urban transfers in India.

[26] Faure, 'Town and Country', offers a Chinese historian's perspective on Weber's ideas.

[27] Miller, *Urban Societies*, 210–11.

[28] See: Clark, ed., *Small Towns*.

[29] Gaborieau, 'Indian Cities', offers a concise, agenda-setting survey by focussing on Indo-Muslim urban centres.

[30] See, for instance: Habib, *Agrarian System*, 89–90; Habib, 'Capitalistic Development'. See, also: Moosvi, *People*, 120–22.

At this level of the urban hierarchy, such towns became engines of proto-industrial growth in the countryside and exhibited a rurban character; we might more appropriately speak of 'rurbanisation' than urbanisation.[34] And, more broadly, the Mughal state and its successors might even be conceived as 'polisocracies' – where government was affected through the medium of towns – resulting in the proliferation and expansion of urban centres, as well as an increase in urban-centred crafts and lifeways; hardly a venal aristocracy bleeding the countryside dry as much as the promotion of an urban-forward way of life that critically depended on the rural sector.[35] All this suggests a comparable mechanics to what was in evidence in mainland southeast Asia or in Europe after c. 1450, where the process unfolded earlier, and militates against the drawing of unduly sharp contrasts between town and countryside.[36]

Urban growth and economic growth went hand-in-hand.[37] The first driver of this process was agrarian expansion, itself underwritten by the steady shift from subsistence to market-oriented production (§5.1). It was necessary for the size, number, and reach of urban (marketing) centres to increase, and the extent and complexity of their interlinkage to intensify. In this way, output – whether primary products or even village manufactures – could be brought to places of greater demand, thereby supporting an economic (and political) system based on market exchange. A similar picture can be painted for many parts of the world, including the Ottoman Empire, where growth in population and trade underpinned a great urban expansion in the sixteenth century, and in China and Japan.[38] This was maintained in the seventeenth century, albeit at a lower rate.[39] A second driver can be located in urban centres themselves, which were home to pools of specialised labour capable of producing fine-quality goods. In India, specialist textile production was fairly urbanised, so that growing demand for cloth from the seventeenth century spurred urban growth, much like that witnessed in European weaving centres such as Florence, Segovia, Leiden, and Lyon at various times.[40]

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[31] Datta, 'Rural-Urban Continuum'.

[32] Bhardwaj, '*Qasbahs* in Mewat', 321–26. See, also: Habib, *Agrarian System*, 62–67, where this village manufacture of oil, *gur*, and cotton thread is discussed in detail, albeit without drawing out the implications for rural-urban integration.

[33] Bayly and Subrahmanyam, 'Portfolio Capitalists'; Kothiyal, 'Market Towns', which paints a similar picture, focussing on Marwar; Alam, *Crisis*, 102–03. On the acquisition of rural real estate by merchants and bankers, see: Devra, 'Mandis and Chowkis'.

[34] Datta, 'Rural-Urban Continuum', 103, for citation. *C.f.* Subrahmanyam, 'Rural Industry', *passim*, and 111–14, for explicit, critical engagement with 'proto-industrialisation'.

[35] Malekandathil, 'Introduction',10–13, as well as 13–14, for comparison with the state in Portuguese India, which is held to be more extractive.

[36] On the former, see: Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 177–78.

[37] Such is the thrust of Naqvi, 'Urbanisation', on the Mughal north, which links changes in the locus of political and economic dynamism over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to changes in where urban growth occurred. Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, especially 10–38, 199–224, paints in more detail such patterns and relationships in later early modern England.

4.1.3 Types of Urban Centre

Urban centres can be identified through references to them as, for instance, *shahrs*, *qasbahs*, and *mandis*, or by bearing certain suffixes (e.g., *–abad*, *–nagar*, *–pattam*, *–pur*). This provides an inadequate basis for any kind of taxonomy of Indian towns and cities, however, not least because of a place's changing fortunes (growth, decline, abandonment) or by virtue of its original functions being complemented by others in equal or even greater measure. So, for instance, a town may have begun life as a royal and political centre (e.g., Delhi), often because of the military-strategic advantages possessed by the site, but others owed their existence to economic factors (e.g., Ahmedabad, Jaunpur, Patna, Calicut, Cochin), and the two went hand-in-hand nicely in time in India as in China.[41] Since proximity to saintly figures and the patronage of religious institutions sanctified kingly power, many towns grew thanks to royal initiative around a sacred centre (i.e., one or more temples and mosques, *dargahs* and shrines; e.g., Allahabad, Burhanpur, Vijayanagara).[42] By the same turn, holy men were attracted to political and intellectual centres (e.g., Delhi, Ajmer). Ultimately, most towns and cities gradually combined secular/administrative/commercial with sacred/ritual/royal functions.[43] Map 4A shows the locations of cities described here and in what follows.

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[38] G. William Skinner's application of central place theory to the Chinese past was a pivotal intervention, influential beyond Chinese studies, though it has been critiqued and tweaked since, sometimes in favour of network theory; see: Swope, 'Late Ming'. See, also: Gordon, 'Burhanpur'; Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii, 449–51; Faroqhi, *Towns*, 49–74.

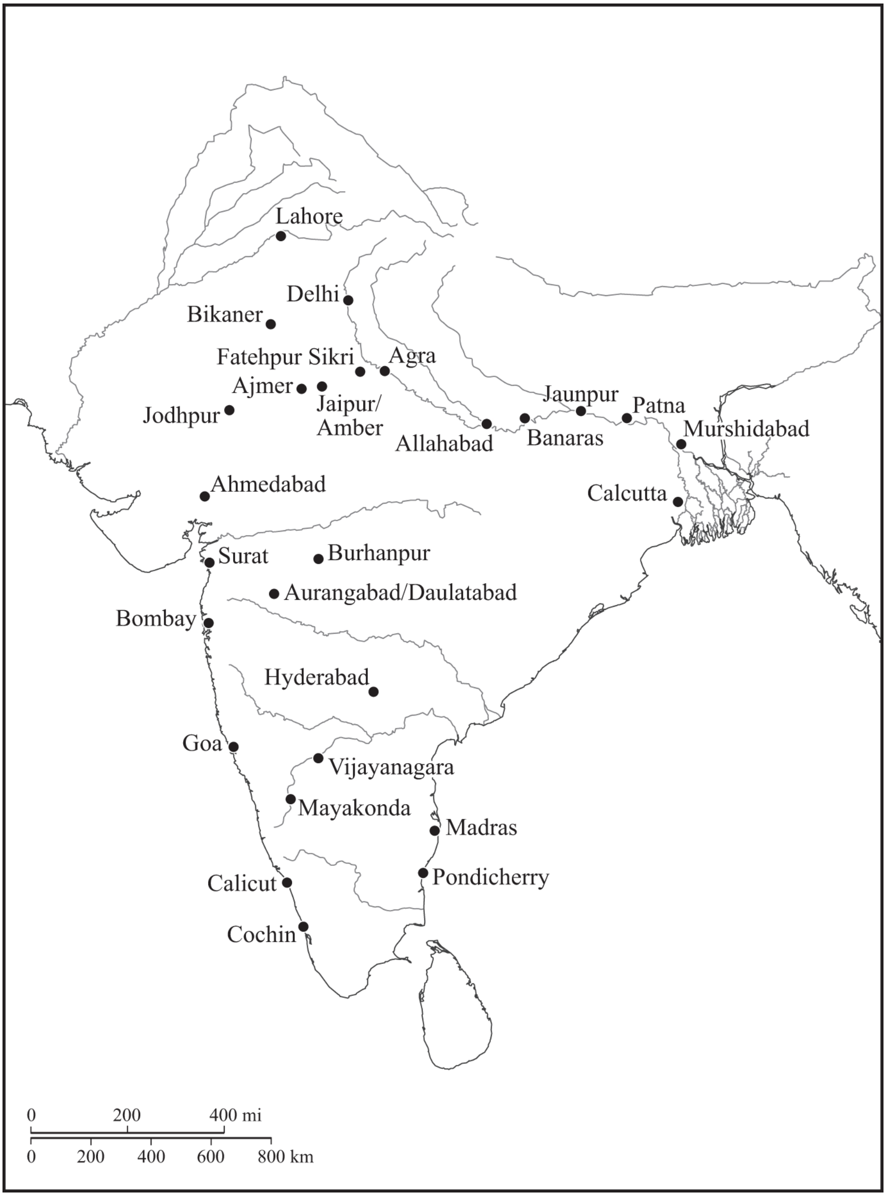
[39] Boyar, 'Ottoman City', 276.

[40] Burke, 'Patterns', 122.

[41] See: Swope, 'Late Ming', which usefully focuses on small cities rather than the largest centres that have dominated the scholarship.

[42] Gordon, 'Burhanpur'.

[43] Evidence from northern Vietnam not only suggests this was not the case everywhere; it also suggests sacred-cum-royal centres were less durable there than in south Asia. See: Whitmore, 'Da Viet'.


Lahore
Delhi
Bikaner
Fatehpur Sikri
Agra
Ajmer
Jaipur/
Amber
Jodhpur
Jaunpur
Patna
Allahabad
Banaras
Murshidabad
Ahmedabad
Calcutta
Surat
Burhanpur
Aurangabad/Daulatabad
Bombay
Hyderabad
Goa
Vijayanagara
Mayakonda
Madras
Calicut
Pondicherry
Cochin
0
200
400 mi
0
200
400
600
800 km

Map 4A Urban Centres

To function can be added scale and distinguishing features: imperial capitals and primate cities, secondary cites, large and small towns, and local marketing centres, as well as coastal versus inland centres, or walled versus unfortified ones, not to mention those primarily or originally revolving around pilgrimage or religious learning.[44] There are, again, reasons to be cautious about any typology based on such factors. In the first place, it would be unwise to think of settlements as nested into a strict hierarchy, for a city might not in all respects have been more important or influential than a small town. *Qasbahs*, as we shall see, not only grew in number, but also became more important by the end of our period.[45] Their small size and origins as commercial-cum-bureaucratic centres notwithstanding, some *qasbahs* attracted notable saints and other learned men, thereby becoming important places of intellectual congregation and debate that rivalled larger centres, as M. Raisur Rahman's work brings to light.[46]

Mughal territorial expansion gave further impetus to urbanisation, but scale produced its own (perverse) effects.[47] Much as the Tokugawa shoguns enforced the residence of Japan's nobles (*daimyo*) at Edo for a year at a time, so the Mughal emperors insisted upon the regular presentation of nobles at court.[48] The result was a great boost to the population of the capital as lords brought their vast household retinues, boosting the local economy and drawing in large amounts of labour. Yet, this was also impermanent, for it was unsustainable without the presence of the emperor and his court, upon which it was entirely dependent. The peripatetic nature of the Mughal court in its classical age meant the imperial capital shifted repeatedly for long spells, with Jahangir repeatedly sojourning in Ajmer, Kashmir, and Lahore during his reign even as Agra remained the capital. The new city of Shahjahanabad had been inhabited for only four decades before Aurangzeb uprooted the court and left for the south, making his capital at Aurangabad, while his immediate successors were crowned in Agra.[49] Thus, Delhi was without a king for the years 1679 to 1712, although it remained a major cultural and political centre and retained the title of *Dar-ul-Khilafat* (Abode of the Caliphate, or 'seat of the empire').[50] To this can be added the frequent campaigns and tours that left the capital city virtually deserted, albeit temporarily. Only in the period of so-called Mughal ‘decline’ – with all its downward implications for the city’s prosperity and population – did Shahjahanabad become a permanent seat of the Mughal emperors.

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[44] Gaborieau, 'Indian Cities', especially 187–93. A classic and very informative exposition of the hierarchical progression of Indian marketing centres from the countryside to the city remains: Grover, 'Integrated Pattern'.

[45] Moosvi, *People*, 118–34, for the enumeration of *qasbahs* in Akbar's time and estimates of urban population.

[46] Rahman, *Qasbah Towns*, especially 28–50, for a delineation of the meaning of '*qasbah*' in the Indian context compared with elsewhere in the Muslim Mediterranean and middle East, and of the nature of *qasbahs* in medieval and early modern India.

[47] Naqvi, 'Urbanisation', for a survey.

[48] Screech, *Tokyo*, 41–42.

[49] On the slackening of the walled city's population upon Aurangzeb's departure for the Deccan: Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 67–68.

[50] See: Chandra, 'Delhi, 1675–1725', for a summary portrait of Delhi in this time.

A *bandar* (port) was a special kind of place, serving as a gateway between India and the economies of the Indian Ocean arena. Anthony Reid termed the mid-fifteenth to late seventeenth centuries in southeast Asia the ‘Age of Commerce’. As greater Chinese and European demand for goods created an economic boom, the benefits flowed through and were captured by ports, some of which were of long-standing but most of which grew in connection with others (e.g., Yemen, Aden, Hormuz, and Surat, to take examples from the western Indian Ocean). A major harbour/port channelled such volumes of goods and money that its authorities wielded considerable power in their own right vis-à-vis regional or imperial powers like the Mughal Empire (§7.3.2). Surat was such a port; its role as India’s maritime terminus for pilgrims making the Hajj and its prosperity earnt it the title of *Bandar-i Mubarak* (Auspicious Port), with its population swelling to 200,000 around the early eighteenth century.[51] This growth was connected to the boom in intra-Asian and Euro-Asian trade from c. 1450 and was interlinked, therefore, with the growth of cities both near (e.g., Yemen, Aden, Hormuz) and far. Seville, for instance, grew in the sixteenth century as the main harbour through which American silver reached Spain, while Amsterdam was home to merchants and companies who likewise connected both sides of the Atlantic and from the early seventeenth century connected Europe with Asia.[52] Similarly, the largest cities in sub-Saharan Africa were located on or near the coast, their expansion connected to the emerging Atlantic economy (including the slave trade), not least Elmina, Accra, and Abomey. Their populations were said to range from around 10,000 to 25,000, making them smaller than Surat but comparable in size and dynamics to the urban centres on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts.[53]

There are other ways in which we ought to fine-tune our understanding. A *bandar* like Surat could harbour large vessels plying long-distance routes, but it could also harbour smaller boats involved in ‘looping’ or ‘country’ trade (i.e., those going from point to point along India’s coast, often taking bulk goods such as foodstuffs but also smaller quantities of more precious things).[54] A large port and its hinterland was thus plugged into the developing world economy, but also into local and regional circuits, complementing but also competing with smaller ports (*baras*), such as Mandvi and Mundra in the case of Surat.[55] These secondary-tier ports have received a little less attention from scholars in their own right to date, although this imbalance is lately being redressed in Indian Ocean historiography.[56] Furthermore, a number of ports – notably Calicut and Cochin – generated sufficient wealth for their rulers to carve out hinterland city-states, which we might cautiously compare to those of the Swahili coast (e.g., Mogadishu, Melinde, Mombassa, Zanzibar, Kilwa), in Italy (Venice, most obviously), or the Hanseatic cities in northern Europe (e.g. Bremen, Lübeck, Hamburg, Danzig).[57] Finally, alongside indigenous maritime towns and cities were those established by the Europeans: the capital of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* at Goa, but also secondary centres like Daman and Diu, Colombo and Cannanore; the English Company's fortified settlements at Madras (est. after 1639), Bombay (1665), and Calcutta (1696), which became the constitutive – and sometimes competing – centres of the Company's trading operations and, later, its empire; and the headquarters in Pondicherry (est. 1673) of France's Indian enterprises.[58] The English settlements were peculiar in being quasi-extraterritorial spaces in which the Company exercised its sovereignty – as per its royal charter – and were thus formative to the Company's statehood long before the conquest of India that began in the mid-eighteenth century.[59]

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[51] Burke, ‘Patterns’, 125, for an estimate of Surat’s population.

[52] Ibid, 120–22, and also 127, where the author compares various ‘colonial cities’ – most of which were ports – including Madras, Bombay, Havana, Batavia, Manila, and Macao

[53] Ibid, 126.

[54] See, for example: Gokhale, *Surat*, especially 73–115.

[55] Saxena, ‘Mandvi and Mundra’, here especially 576.

4.1.4 Comparing North and South India

So much for urban growth, but what of the spatial variegations in its rate, extent, or character across the subcontinent? To begin with, it bears remembering that the Mughal north was not uniformly urbanised. Laying along the arterial highway – the 'Grand Trunk Road' – from Kabul to the Bay of Bengal via Delhi, Lahore was in its heyday declared a rival of Constantinople or deemed without comparison anywhere in Asia or Europe. It was a metropolis, therefore, and the section of the Grand Trunk Road across Punjab from Lahore to Delhi was also dotted at intervals with numerous manufacturing towns connected to regional and long-distance trade networks.[60] Shireen Moosvi's comparison of the share of urban taxes in total revenue demand (*jama*) reveals, however, that urbanisation was much higher in c. 1600 in Gujarat (18.7%) or around Agra (15.7%) than in Punjab (3.7%).[61]

These statistics afford a tentative comparison with the south. They suggest that Shahjahanabad was hardly an isolated capital, for it was not only built at the head of a fertile tract that has steadily become one of the densest zones of settlement in the world, but also lay along a great commercial axis connecting maritime with continental trade routes, and becoming more and more urbanised in consequence.[62] This larger region cannot quite be described as a conurbation, yet is appreciable for having formed an integrated network of cities and towns of varying sizes and functions that lay like a mesh over highly productive countryside. This was distinctive yet also recognisable elsewhere, whether in the Low Countries or the heartland of Imperial China, which represent this sort of formation at differing degrees of compactness/expansiveness. Vijayanagara was also a metropolis, its population of perhaps some 350,000 rivalling that of Cairo in 1400, but its character and relationship to the surrounding terrain was probably rather different.[63] It has been described 'as an example of anomalous hypercentralisation' – and a short-lived one at that, rising as a 'metropolis from a constellation of small villages and forts' and then reverting upon the empire's collapse.[64]

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[56] See, for instance: Hall, 'Coastal Cities', and the volume in which it is published.

[57] Malekandathil, 'Introduction', 15, for these comparisons.

[58] Biedermann, *Portuguese*, provides an excellent analysis of the morphology of port cities in early Portuguese Asia.

[59] Stern, *Company-State*.

[60] Lally, *Silk Roads*, 50–56.

[61] Moosvi, *People*, 130–33.

Vijayanagara was a monumental city built around conjoint royal and sacred centres, perhaps best compared, therefore, to those capitals of pre-Hispanic central and south American states where both functions were preeminent, giving the city its identity and differentiating it from surrounding areas. The Aztec capital at Tenochtitlán comes to mind, with its population of a few hundred thousand at the time of Hernán Cortés' arrival in 1519. Or it might be compared to Angkor (capital of the Khmer Empire, its population around 100,000 in c. 1400) or Ava (variously the capital of the Toungoo and Konbaung dynasties in Burma), for these cities similarly dominated the surrounding country, with generally low-level marketing centres sufficing to channel trade and organise relations between the capital and the countryside.[65] The capitals and courts of the Vijayanagara Empire and Deccan Sultanates were cosmopolitan places, and these kingdoms were deeply incorporated into the webs of the Persian and Arabic cosmopolises. This fact notwithstanding, northerners found in the south unfamiliar and even alien landscapes and lifeways.[66] Town-building accompanied the colonization of the south by the Tughluqs and later by the Mughals (e.g., the construction of capitals at Daulatabad and Aurangabad, respectively). They encouraged (reluctant) northerners to migrate to the Deccan and transformed the urban fabric in a bid to make the south more hospitable to emigrants, much as the Spanish had done upon their colonisation of the Americas from the sixteenth century.[67] This project was perhaps only completed by the Asaf Jahi dynasty (est. 1724), who made their capital at Hyderabad.[68]

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[62] Moosvi estimates Agra's urban tax-to-revenue ratio at 15.7, signifying a high degree of urbanisation in the *doab* region: ibid, 133.

[63] Burke, 'Patterns', 124, for population details.

[64] Heitzman, 'South India', 304, for citation, and 313–21.

[65] Burke, 'Patterns', 125–26.

[66] Eaton, *Essays*, 168.

[67] Fernández-Armesto, 'Latin America', 368.

[68] Faruqui, 'Hyderabad'.

How might the differences be drawn and explained most appropriately? One distinction, drawn by Ravi Palat, contrasts wheat-cultivating zones (e.g., north India, Europe) and riziculture zones (south India, parts of southeast and east Asia).[69] The high-productivity of land under wet-rice cultivation to some extent freed-up labour for craft production, which was consequently ruralised to a greater extent in south India, much as in parts of China or Japan. The Deccan plateau, Pushkar Sohoni observes, was peculiar in another respect: the 'displacement of the state apparatus and market networks into two separate [urban] patterns' in the Deccan sultanates – arguably in response to gunpowder technologies, which had a great impact in the south (§6.4.1) – meant military-bureaucratic centres were decanted into the string of defensive forts and thus separated from the network of dedicated marketing centres.[70] According to James Heitzman, finally, the southern coastal and interior regions were historically far more polycentric than the northern proto-conurbation dominated by Lahore-Delhi-Agra (surrounded by countryside); comparable metropolises like Vijayanagara had only an occasional and fleeting existence in the south.[71] Overall, therefore, vital differences can be discerned between the north and south, inland and coast, zones producing such grains as wheat and those focussed on wet rice cultivation, themes taken up in the next chapter.[72]

4.1.5 Urban Decline?

If the city was no longer a place to find refuge and prosperity or became ridden with plague of the kind afflicting Hindustan in the 1610s, and if the countryside consequently became a more favourable place to live, did citizens abandon the city?[73] In early modern India, many cities remained in near-constant use, though populations ebbed and flowed in line with the vicissitudes of the ruling authority's fortunes (e.g. Delhi), others were allowed to become derelict when their masters were defeated, only to be brought back into use by later rulers (e.g. Thanjavur), yet even important cities fell into disuse and were abandoned (e.g., Champaner, erstwhile capital of the Gujarat Sultanate, or the Bahmani capital and palace city of Firuzabad, or Akbar's later court centre at Fatehpur Sikri).[74] During its later eighteenth-century 'twilight', the extent of Delhi's built-up area diminished by around 50 per cent, and its markets by about 30 per cent, indicating a contraction in population.[75] A knock-on effect of Mughal imperial decline was the shrinking importance of certain nearby centres like Korah-Jahanabad, already troubled because of its poor ecology and now no longer needed as a marketing centre nor used by the imperial army, which had ceased to march through the region.[76] A different combination of environmental and political changes underpinned Lahore's prolonged twilight, which began around the time the city was abandoned as the Mughal capital in 1598 or else upon the receding of the Ravi's bed away from the city in the seventeenth century, before intensifying in the first half of the eighteenth century amidst the political contests for its control. A beneficiary of this process, however, was the nearby city of Multan and its satellite towns and rural hinterland in western Punjab. Multan absorbed the available specialist labour (e.g., skilled weavers and fabric printers), anchored itself in long-distance trade networks, and thus served as the obvious base of Durrani imperialism in north India.[77]

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[69] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 52–67. See, also: Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 14–31, which details matters of migration and settlement, the location of agrarian production and craft, population size and distribution, and the nature and size of urban centres across south India, c. 1500–1650.

[70] Sohoni, *Deccan Sultanate*, especially 96–97. *C.f.* Eaton and Wagoner, *Contested Sites*, xxi–xxii.

[71] Heitzman, 'South India'. See, also: Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 14–25.

[72] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, especially 33–43, and 216 for a useful summary of the thesis.

[73] On the plague: Sussman, 'Black Death', 335–39.

[74] See the essay by Michell and Eaton reprinted in Eaton, *Essays*, 176–88, which draws the allusion between the two doomed Bahmani and Mughal capitals.

Indeed, there seems to have been more of a redistribution of urban population than an outright decline in the eighteenth century; city dwellers can hardly be said to have fled to the countryside or abandoned urban lifeways.[78] The causes were numerous, but the limits of agrarian expansion naturally set the limits of urbanisation or moulded its character. The brute fact of ecology became more apparent with the collapse of the Mughal imperium: thereafter, local potentates could no longer draw salaries for imperial service and had to rely, instead, on whatever income could be generated from the land. One effect, therefore, was the enlargement of new or old dynastic capitals. In Rajasthan, for instance, Bikaner and Jodhpur grew in size, receiving influxes of migrants from other erstwhile imperial centres (e.g., Nagore, Jalore, and Merta). In the Gangetic valley, the marvellous capitals at Faizabad and Murshidabad of the Awadh and Bengal *nawabis*, as well as Bareilly, Farrukhabad, and Rampur, which were under the sway of the rulers of Rohilkhand and their successors, was part and parcel of this development.[79] It was due to Mughal successor state rulers' patronage of their royal centres, the enlargement and expenditure of their courts and gentries, and because of those 'intermediate entities' (e.g., jurists and other religious scholars, merchants, bureaucrats) sucked in from the declining Mughal domains and often empowered by this ascendance.[80]

This process did not only occur at the expense of older (Mughal) centres. In the parts of Rajasthan most marked by aridity, limited irrigation, and/or poor soils, rural output was insufficient to support a more graded urban hierarchy. These places were marked by a lower ratio of urban population than Marwar (which was fairly fertile) or Jaisalmer, Bikaner, and Pokaran (where tank and well irrigation was more widespread). In these more ecologically delicate areas, medium-sized urban centres were sacrificed while villages grew to be quite large (a trend also seen in Japan), matched by *qasbahs* of similar size.[81] These *qasbahs* were distinguished from others elsewhere in north India, however. They were sometimes situated in very arid places because their only purpose was to capture taxes from passing local and inter-regional trade, rather than as compact administrative-cum-manufacturing centres closely entwined with agriculturally rich countryside.[82]

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[75] Bayly, 'Delhi', 225.

[76] Ibid, 226–28.

[77] Lally, *Silk Roads*, 50–56, and *passim*.

[78] Bayly, 'Delhi', 222, for a similar hypothesis.

[79] Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 104–59.

[80] Mukherjee, 'Eighteenth-Century Bengal'; Bayly, *Rulers*, 62–88, 133–51.

In the south, too, redistribution characterises what happened to urban populations far better than any notion of deurbanisation. It was a longer and more complex process, but similarly connected to the waning of imperial authority in the face of competitors, old and new. The defeat of Vijayanagara's armies in 1565 led to the dismemberment of the empire at the hands of the Deccan sultanates and other regional kingdoms, emptying Vijayanagara's monumental capital of part of its population, but nowhere resulting in the growth of any other capital to such a grand scale. The evidence is rather more spartan than for the north, but it seems, instead, that urbanisation similarly revolved around numerous smaller capitals and – beneath them in the urban hierarchy – those towns that served as administrative centres and commercial nodes.[83] R. Barry Lewis brings this to light in his recent study of Mayakonda, a *pargana* (district) headquarters town in the independent kingdom of Chitradurga, located in present-day central Karnataka. The Chitradurga *nayakas* (lords) claimed connection to Mayakonda in their origin legends, also claiming to have been appointed as local lords by the Vijayanagara rulers, but then seizing the opportunity after Vijayanagara's defeat in 1565 to establish an independent kingdom of their own.[84] Extending to an area roughly the size of Wales at its height, Chitradurga was a significant kingdom, no matter that it was dwarfed by neighbouring Mysore.

The *pargana* formed the main territorial unit of numerous south Indian kingdoms, and their respective headquarters towns were of importance not only as nodes in the state's revenue-bureaucratic apparatus, but also because they 'often figured as pawns in the wars of this period' for 'their capture by an enemy could become a revenue gain or bargaining chip for the winner and a permanent revenue loss for the loser.'[85] This necessitated the repair and successive enlargement of Mayakonda's fortifications, with several batteries, a palace, and a commemorative monument (a *samadhi*) soon added to the fort complex. The 543 forts in erstwhile Chitradurga state's eleven *parganas* varied in size and significance. For its part, Mayakonda was home not only to a fort but a small town that grew around it, being the administrative centre of the

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[81] Bayly, 'Delhi', 222, for mention of this phenomenon in pre-modern Japan.

[82] Devra, 'Mandis and Chowkis'.

[83] For a discussion of the state of the field: Lewis, 'Mayakonda', 1.

[84] Ibid, 2.

[85] Ibid, 1.

pargana after all, and was also strategically important insofar as it lay along the road channelling goods, money, and people to the capital.[86] Following the Chitradurga dynasty's defeat, it 'remained a headquarters town under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan and was garrisoned as one of several fortified posts on Mysore's frontier with the Maratha country.'[87] Following the British conquest, it 'drifted into obscurity', as did other fortified headquarters towns that were not transformed into *taluq* administrative centres.

Mayakonda was small yet subsidiary in the urban hierarchy only to royal capitals. Its rurban character, historical development, and demographic vicissitudes can be compared with other places surveyed in this section, particularly those parts of Rajasthan and the north of similar aridity and fertility to the Deccan. Moving from inland to coastal areas, ecology played a lesser role in urban redistributions, yet the combined impact of imperial decline and the resultant heightening of political competition was similarly decisive. Surat's decline in the eighteenth century was not due to the growth of Bombay, even though that East India Company port benefited from the former's diminution. In western Java, well before Surat's demise, Sunda Kelapa (the main port of Pajajaran, a Hindu kingdom) was replaced by the Islamic port principality of Banten in the sixteenth century, which was in turn supplanted by Dutch Batavia in the seventeenth century.[88] In 1511, the Portuguese seized the thriving port of Melaka (Malacca), only to be superseded by Batavia – which served as the Asian headquarters of the VOC – a century later. Such processes were part of the competitive and changing environment of the Indian Ocean arena. Batavia, notably, was a planned city – and it is to the realisation of idealised conceptions of urban space that we now turn.

4.2 People and Politics

4.2.1 Cities and Imperialism

For the Spanish in America, tearing down pre-Hispanic cities and inaugurating urban development along European lines signalled a break with the past and the projection of Spanish imperialism, although even the best-laid schemes for neat urban grids and the like could be muddied by exigencies, such as the need to house labourers in the mining towns of Potosí and Zacatecas.[89] Nevertheless, the viceregal palaces and courts, the churches, squares, and streets were stage sets for the performance of Spanish authority.[90] Not only the layout, but also the very appearance of colonial buildings spoke volumes: the edifices of the *conquistadores'* mansions were intended to be 'read' by onlookers, and were part of their proprietors' self-fashioning of a new life and status in the New World.[91] By contrast, the less culturally arrogant rulers of the Old World, like the Ottomans and Mughals, were aware of the huge symbolic windfall of conquering a city like Constantinople or Delhi. These cities were littered not only with important temples, mosques, and shrines, patronage of which could help connect the new king to his people, but also fortresses, former palaces, and other imperial monuments erected by the Ottomans' and Mughals' illustrious predecessors. Unlike the tightly packed architectural clutter of Agra, however, there were some spaces in Delhi that offered Shah Jahan a blank canvas upon which to create his new city. But what form would it take, and why?

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[86] Ibid, 7.

[87] Ibid, 5.

[88] Blussé, 'Port Cities', 72.

[89] Fernández-Armesto, 'Latin America', 369–72. This is to say nothing of the resilience of indigenous institutions and assemblies, which remained a part of the urban social landscape and the built environment: *op. cit.*, 375.

[90] See: Cañeque, *King's Living Image*.

Gridirons might seem like the product of the orderly mind of early modern Italian planners (or shrewd developers selling plots of real estate), but these were neither the invention of Renaissance thinkers nor only to be found in Europe.[92] The developing preference for the gridiron pattern within the rapidly expanding Iberian world was imposed on the core of Damão (Daman) in the sixteenth century, for example, but elsewhere within the Indo-Portuguese world – such as Bassein and Cochin on India's western coast – settlements merely took a more broadly orthogonal or regular plan.[93] The supposedly rational and modern plan of cities in the Spanish and Dutch empires has been contrasted with the 'organic' and 'medieval' character of urban growth in Portuguese Asia, yet this ignores how Dutch urbanscapes literally built upon Portuguese foundations. Putting aside the merits of these distinctions, it bears noting that segregated streets and neighbourhoods for different communities were a feature of Portuguese colonial cities from the sixteenth century.[94] A gridiron layout on a more extensive scale came into being in Pondicherry in south India during its occupation by the Dutch (from 1693), who also distinguished what would become the *ville Blanche* (White Town) from the *ville Noire* (Black Town) – developments that were expanded, not instigated, by the French after their resumption of control in 1697, Jean Deloche tells us.[95]

In 1727, Sawai Jai Singh II inaugurated the relocation of his capital from the hilly and congested city of Amber and the construction of a new and entirely planned city on flat terrain – Jaipur. It was constructed according to Indic architectonic treatises (the *Vashtu shastra*) in combination with inspiration taken from the form of the Mughal *chahar-bagh* garden design, resulting in the city's arrangement upon an orderly grid – each corresponding to the planetary bodies in Vedic astrology to affect particular qualities in Jaipur's inhabitants – as innovative as it was unusual and probably unprecedented in the Indian context.[96] What the authors of Renaissance architectural treatises emphasised – and what was influencing these urban projects in Europe and around the world – was the need for a regular plan, such as that afforded by a grid, but equally a star or even concentric circles.[97] Whether it is because they facilitated the smoother passage of traffic, the free flow of the air, or because of the cognitive benefits arising from such spatial organisation, the grid has been a feature of urban plans around the world for millennia, not least China and the Sinosphere (Korea, Japan).[98]

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[91] Restall and Fernandez-Armesto, *Conquistadors*, 47.

[92] On the gridiron as an instrument of the real estate market: Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 87.

[93] Gomes, 'Portuguese Urban Settlements', 722–23.

[94] Biedermann, *Portuguese*, 105, 120–31, 138–41.

[95] Deloche, *Origins*.

Geomantic principles also informed the plan of cities in the Sinosphere, explaining the layout of the new shogunal city of Edo, a rough contemporary of Shahjahanabad.[99] Both were laid out in the early seventeenth century. Both were transformed around the mid-nineteenth century and subsequently swallowed up by new metropolitan developments (those constitutive of colonial Delhi and Tokyo, respectively), although the shogunal capital flourished in its final decades whereas its counterpart entered its twilight. Corporeal metaphors guided the layout of both cities or else help us make sense of their morphology and features (analogised as heart, mind, passageways), but their interpretation necessarily differs because of the different intellectual and cultural ecumenes in which Edo and Shahjahanabad belonged.[100]

Islam has been quintessentially linked to urban life since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, even if it is difficult to elucidate such a thing as an 'Islamic city'. For their part, Muslim philosophers considered urban centres the ideal 'context for actuating ethical thought and behaviour', although some wrote critically of the corruption and temptation to be had in such places of congregation.[101] Overall, cities have held a special place in Muslim life and thought, and so it was in the city that Muslim conquerors proclaimed their sovereignty over a place by having their name mentioned in the *khutba*, and it was the city that became stamped with royal authority through the patronage of new buildings.[102] Guiding rulers and their urban planners were ideas found in Islamic philosophy concerning the virtuous city, particularly in works of *akhlaq* (ethical writings which also formed the backbone of princely education; §10.1).[103] The imprint of Nasir al-Din Tusi's ideas can allegedly be read, for example, in the phenomenology of key buildings in Fatehpur Sikri (Fig. 4D), the entirely new city built on Akbar's orders a few kilometres from Agra roughly contemporaneously with Shah Abbas' new city of Isfahan.[104] According to Stephen P. Blake, Shahjahanabad's plan reflects the influence of a range of Indic and Islamicate cosmologies or geomantic ideas, but he considers certain Sufi ideas originating in Iran concerning the analogy of man (microcosm) with the universe (macrocosm) and the great chain of being as especially important; the emperor, his palace, the city, and the kingdom were thus telescoped, the kingly body and the body politic found within one another (see, also: §7.2.1).[105]

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[96] Asher, 'Jaipur', here 413.

[97] Burke, 'Culture', 439.

[98] Ibid, 439; Jinnai, 'Edo'.

[99] Screech, *Tokyo*, 28–31, 110.

[100] Ibid, 28–30.

[101] Bennison, 'Introduction', 1–2; Kavuri-Bauer, 'Fatehpur Sikri', 43–44. Neglia, 'Historiographical Notes', valuably gives a wider survey, while demonstrating how little work has been completed on Indo-Muslim urban centres within the frame of the 'Islamic city' or 'Muslim city', as borne out by the remainder of the volume that this essay introduces, although see Gaborieau, 'Indian Cities', for a survey and the beginnings of an agenda.

[102] Moin, 'Sovereign Violence', 472–76.

[103] For a discussion of architectural planning and building practice in Mughal and Rajput India, see: Dadlani, *From Stone*, 119–28.

Across the Islamic world, various forms of charitable endowments (*waqf*, *madad-i ma'ash*, *inam*) to support mosques, *madrasas* (schools), and bathhouses were granted by kings as part of their patronage of urban settings and their performance or exercise of kingly duty.[106] It meant such features not only defined the townscapes of the Ottoman and Mughal worlds, but also became so connected to imperial identity that *new* mosques and shops were built even in cities already bearing these structures – as in Cairo after its conquest in 1517, for instance – so as to stamp them with the dynasty's imprint.[107] Such institutions also became major employers or else provided relief and facilities for ordinary and indigent townsfolk; public rituals in such places and inscriptions on the edifice of such buildings bearing the details of the king's largesse declared his protective embrace of his people.[108]

A side-effect of such benefactions was to tie more closely religious and commercial life. The approach to Shahjahanabad's Jami Masjid (Fig. 4E) was a place where devotees and city dwellers could purchase kebabs and sherbets from hawkers while gawping at magicians and jugglers, for instance, which had a great deal to do with the heavy and regular footfall of the mosque's worshippers.[109] By contrast, Edo's Senso-ji temple received a pittance for a stipend, such hardship prompting the transformation of its surrounding district into something of a fairground thronged with visitors, there being shops even within the temple precinct, for all this generated income.[110] But sacred and profane collided in either case, at once also blurring a distinction between private and public spaces as land abutting temples and cemeteries became marketplaces, venues for public entertainments, and even neighbourhoods. This was a natural process, unfolding in towns and cities around the world

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[104] Kavuri-Bauer, 'Fatehpur Sikri'. *C.f.* Blake, 'Fathpur Sikri and Isfahan', which reads the two cities as part of a project of legitimising and modernising or bureaucratising the respective empires. For a guide to Tusi's thought, see: Alam, *Languages*, 46–54.

[105] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, xi-xiii, 32–36. For critique of Blake's analysis here, see: Subrahmanyam, 'Structure or Process', 311–12.

[106] Dale, 'Empires and Emporia'. See, also: Faroqhi, *Towns*, 23–48.

[107] Boyar, 'Ottoman City', 278.

[108] See: Boyar and Fleet, *Social History*, 129–56, for evidence from Istanbul.

[109] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 54–55.

[110] Screech, *Tokyo*, 94.

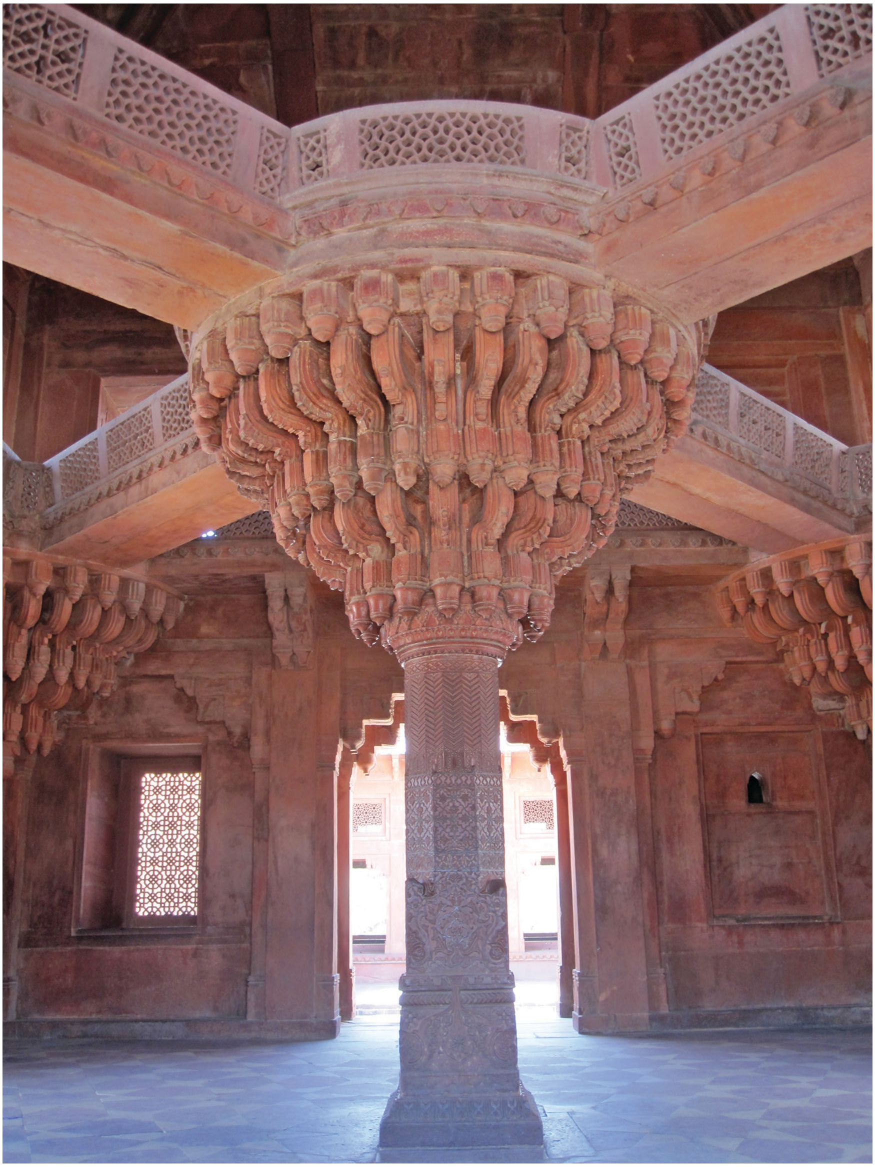

Fig. 4D Akbar’s Hall of Private Audience, Fatehpur Sikri

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

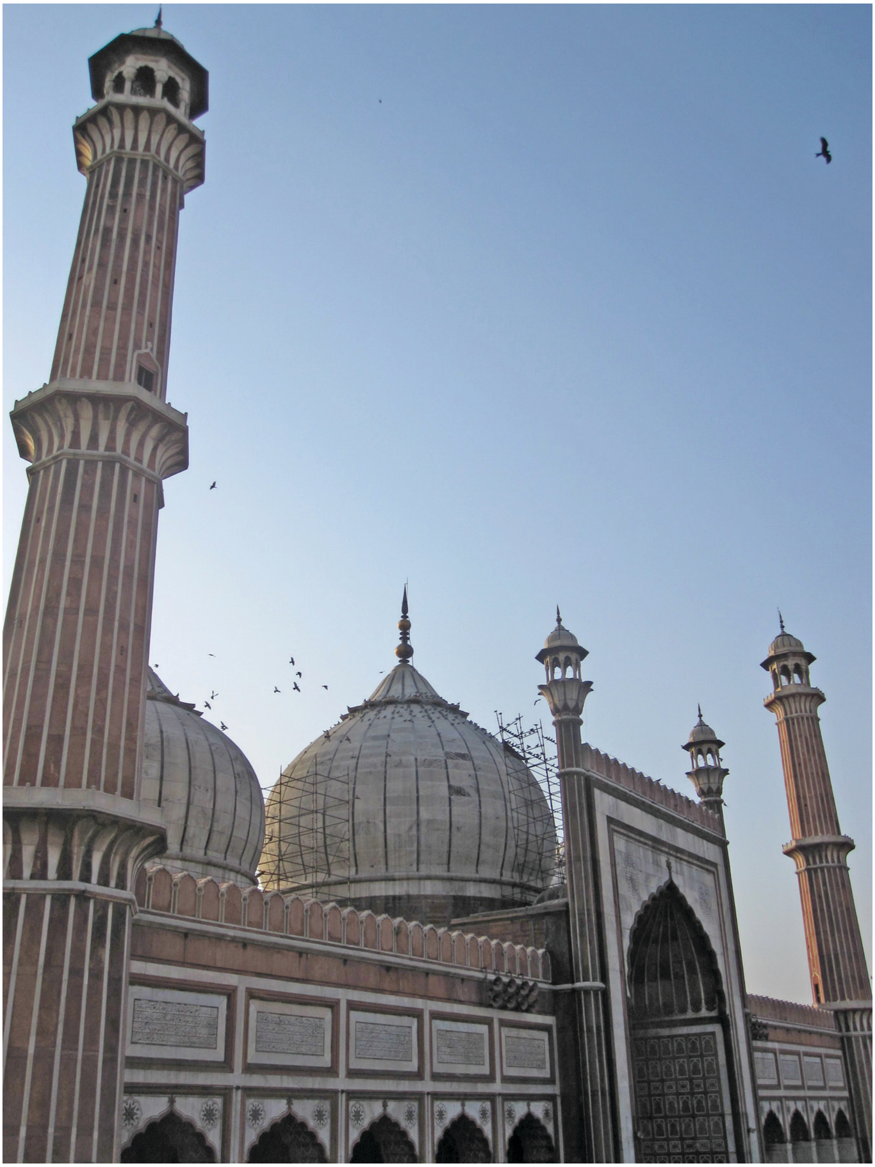

Fig. 4E Shahjahanabad's Jami Masjid

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

long before and since, the result of which has been to create economic interests and livelihoods.[111] So much for ideals, therefore; what of the city's mundane and material realities?

4.2.2 Residential Neighbourhoods

Early in 1739, Nadir Shah entered Shahjahanabad and occupied the Qila Mubarak while his men were billeted around the city. Unrest soon erupted in the streets. The response was a crushing reprisal by Nadir Shah's men, who focused their activities around the city's arterial bazaars, including Chandni Chawk. The immediate effect was large swathes of the city being torched, the death of perhaps 20,000 people, and the strengthening of the victor's hand in the post-war bargaining, resulting in the outflow of some 150 million rupees in cash and 5 million in treasure and valuables – including the Peacock Throne and all that it represented – from the Mughal capital.[112] Another effect of the tumult of 1739 was to accelerate a transformation in the city's morphology underway, in fact, from its earliest days. Outside the Qila Mubarak, mid-seventeenth century Shahjahanabad was comprised of the enormous mansion-compounds of princes and the great nobles as well as the smaller houses of lower-ranking grandees and favourites, besides public and private gardens and squares, marketplaces and shops, temples, mosques, and bathhouses, and thoroughfares large and small.[113] Ordinary people lived either within the residences of the Mughal elites or else outside their walls, depending upon what role they played in these households. Others, for there was a steady stream of migrants to the city until its twilight, lived on land between such compounds that had not yet been built upon.

Portuguese commentators of the sixteenth century evaluated Indian buildings through Iberian and north African frames of reference, thus praising lime and stone buildings with tiled roofs.[114] Portuguese and other European visitors in the seventeenth century praised the grandeur and scale of Indian cities and their finest buildings, but also criticised a kind of indifference on the part of Mughal elites toward investment in the layout, position, and proper construction of dwellings and sanitation infrastructure for the masses.[115] Escheat was held as the cause, although the nature, purposes, and extent of the sovereign's confiscation of nobles' property has been overstated and misunderstood. The resemblance of Indian towns to 'a collection of many villages' was the result, nevertheless, at least in the eyes of Francois Bernier, seventeenth-century French physician and traveller, whose account remains an important source on early modern India.[116] Even in Shahjahanabad, quotidian dwellings were formed of mud walls and thatched roofing. That said, a city as large and flourishing by the mid-seventeenth century as London was certainly no idyll, with mostly dirty water available to rich and poor alike, sewers running full of filth and rotting carcasses, and much of its ill-planned and high-density dwellings of rudimentary construction going up in the almighty conflagration – the 'Great Fire' – of 1666, which broke out in the wake of the worst plague since the Black Death.[117]

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[111] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 88–89.

[112] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 162–63.

[113] An excellent picture of the size and layout of these *palazzo nobile*, the largest probably far grander than their counterparts in Europe and more like hamlets or small towns in their own right, is painted by Blake in *Shahjahanabad*, 44–51, complemented by a detailed inventory of such residences on 71–82.

[114] Gomes, 'Portuguese Urban Settlements', 718–20, 722, where Portuguese building in this manner is described as a bold and audacious act – for only temples and palaces in coastal western India were so constructed – as a means of physically imprinting their authority and presence in the Indian Ocean world.

[115] Sharma, 'The City', 41–42.

Ultimately, their manner of construction made the quotidian dwellings of India's towns and cities liable to fire in hot summers, when thatch dried to tinder and readily went up in flames, or being worn away and collapsing in the monsoon, while their density and the absence of adequate sanitation did little to abate plagues.[118] Sixty-thousand souls are said to have perished in Shahjahanabad in 1662, when three separate fires consumed parts of the city, while the heavy rains of 1716 and 1735 were also destructive.[119] Such buildings sprang up across the capital, nonetheless, encroaching on open land and on spacious thoroughfares, making one early eighteenth-century resident complain of them clogging up the locality in which he lived.[120] As the balance of power drifted from the centre and the empire decentralised, the importance of maintaining a residence in the capital diminished. The result was the proliferation of quotidian dwellings either within, or in place of, some of the city's grand mansions and gardens.[121]

From time to time, royal patrons in the Islamicate world ordered the construction of new mosques, schools, and bathhouses. Such facilities acted like a magnet to population, with distinct communities springing up in their environs rather organically over time. Some were inhabited by migrants from the same place, members of the same profession, congregants of the mosque, church, or temple at the centre of the *mahalla* (residential quarter or neighbourhood), but others were more heterogenous, with multi-ethnic neighbourhoods found not only in large cities but also in medium-sized towns such as Ottoman Ankara.[122]

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[116] Bernier's *Travels* are quoted in Moosvi, *People*, 102, which gives some indication of the kinds of buildings in which ordinary folk resided. See, also: Sharma, 'The City', 72. For a balanced and careful evaluation of escheat, see: Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 63–68. See, also: Koch, 'Agra'; Koch, *Taj Mahal*, 28, 97.

[117] Lincoln, *London*, 198–215.

[118] Sharma, 'The City', 63–66, for testimony relating to instances from across seventeenth-century India.

[119] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 45, 161–62.

[120] Ibid, 44.

[121] Ibid, 165–68, 175–79.

[122] Boyar, 'Ottoman City', 279.

Since one could be said to belong in the *mahalla* centred on this mosque or that bathhouse or marketplace, these same facilities and their respective *mahallas* enabled the division of the city for the administrative purposes, such as registering the population for taxation.

Among the first jobs of Mughal *kotwals* and *qazis*, therefore, was to ensure the division of urban space into such quarters.[123] The *kotwal* of late imperial Shahjahanabad had a dozen policemen under him, as well as a few hundred soldiers and guards at each of the city's gates, all paid for by the government, whereas the several-hundred strong crew of nightwatchmen were paid for by the people themselves.[124] A high-ranking figure, his task was maintaining order, broadly conceived, encompassing such range of functions as: ensuring buying and selling in the bazaar was all above board; supporting *qazis* (magistrates) in dispute-resolution, where necessary; and dealing with crime and punishment, as well as putting down disorder with military force, in collaboration with *thanadars* and *faujdars* (neighbourhood watchmen-cum-policeman and military officials, respectively).[125] In each *mahalla*, *kotwals* were to oversee a representative responsible for setting market prices (sometimes called the *mir-i mahalla* or *darogah*), usually in conjunction with a *dallal*, who acted as an appraiser of the goods and as a broker.[126] Indeed, the cheap and plentiful availability of produce on the market was so bound up with the people's expectations of their king and with their belief in stable government, that Aurangzeb intensified the regulation of urban markets, receiving regular dispatches from officials tasked with reporting prices and punishing those whose corruption or inefficacy created either gluts or scarcity and thus economic strife.[127]

A *mahalla* was usually centred on a religious structure, such as a mosque or temple, sometimes both. A peculiar feature of north Indian cities discerned by Catherine B. Asher concerns the position of mosques and Hindu temples, the former typically positioned and designed to be readily visible and accessible off the neighbourhood's main roads, whereas the latter were usually tucked away deep within the residential quarter itself and difficult to distinguish from surrounding buildings by virtue of any architectural or visual features. This was as true of temples in cities planned by Hindu rulers (e.g., Jaipur) or in

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[123] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 84. Bayly, in *Empire and Information*, 16, provides the clearest available portrait of the surveillance and reporting of crime and disorder in villages and towns, which depended on the day and nightwatchmen (*chaudkidars*) reporting to the *kotwal*, who passed 'reports of affrays, murders, marvels, and violations of moral law' to imperial officials at court – the chief *qazi*, chief cleric (*mufti*), and the censor (*muhtasib*) – with a parallel system of village watchmen, village headmen and accountants (*patwaris*) or registrars (*qanungos*), police 'constables' (*barkanddazis*), and civil magistrates (*qazis*) operating in the countryside.

[124] Metcalfe, 'Reminiscences', 15–16.

[125] Singh, *Town*, 41–168, provides a very useful guide to the Mughal *kotwals*' wide-ranging responsibilities, his relationship to other functionaries (e.g., *qazis*, *faujdars*), and the kinds of interactions he had with city dwellers.

[126] Devra, 'Ahmedabad', 288–89; Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 116.

[127] Kaicker, *The King*, 168–69.

Hindu pilgrimage places (e.g., Banaras) as in those built-up by the Mughals (e.g., Shahjahanabad, where some 96 temples were built between 1648 and 1857).[128] This was also in spite of Hindu and Jain merchants being given significant plots of prime land in Shahjahanabad as the city was under construction, not to mention their tremendous wealth and power by the eighteenth century when temples were constructed in other north Indian dynastic capitals and centres of pilgrimage. Rather, this difference can be explained in terms of how 'Islam has [traditionally] manifested itself boldly in urban settings', whereas Hindu patrons of temples fought a conflict between an Indo-Islamic culture of opulence and the primacy of natural settings (hence courtyard temples) and the dictates of austerity (hence the plainness of temple exteriors) prescribed by their faith.[129]

Port cities, inland entrepots, and capital cities were especially cosmopolitan places.[130] Portuguese-controlled Diu, for instance, faced onto the Arabian Sea and was thus home to Hindu, Jain, and Sikh merchants from Gujarat as well as Sindh and Rajasthan – some having business within the port and its environs (often known as Banias), while others orchestrated trade with east Africa and the Gulf region – not to mention Parsis and Indian and non-Indian Muslims (Persians, Arabs, etc). They competed but also had particular specialisms, each living in separate quarters and attending their own places of worship, the most populous and prosperous of which was the *Barrio dos Baneanes* (the Banias' quarter). The largely non-Catholic and non-Portuguese make-up of Diu meant Portuguese religious restrictions within the *Estado da Índia* were worn more lightly than in Goa, for instance.[131] This was in keeping with other European settlements, which were generally segregated into 'white' and 'black' towns, the latter housing indigenous merchants.

That said, recent research shows that 'white' was a flexible category, at least in certain cases: the Dutch 'scourge' of Portuguese settlements compelled members of their resident Indo-Portuguese community (who were not Protestants, but Catholic 'idolators' and 'pagans', and of mixed heritage at that) to find refuge in Madras, where they were welcomed by the English into the 'white town' for pragmatic reasons, since they brought valuable commercial links and expertise.[132] In the Mughal capitals at Agra, Lahore, and Delhi, a similarly diverse array of merchants mingled with the resident nobility – itself drawn from Hindu and Muslim, Rajput, Deccani, and other Indian as well as Afghan, Iranian, and Uzbek backgrounds – foreign emissaries and the representatives of European companies, plus state functionaries and bureaucrats (Kayasthas and Kashmiri Pandits, for instance), mercenaries, slaves, shopkeepers, service workers of various sorts, and ordinary labourers from near and far and a range of castes and sects.[133] This cosmopolitanism underpinned the city's dynamism but, by the same turn, also created conditions for conflict.[134]

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[128] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 110–11, for statistics on temple construction.

[129] Asher, 'Hindu-Muslim Identities', 139, for citation, and 121–48, for analysis.

[130] *C.f.* Biedermann, *Portuguese*, especially 141–48, which interrogates what the concept ('cosmopolitan') means in port cities that had very different characters even as they were each marked by the segregation of diverse communities.

[131] Dias Antunes, 'Diu', 781–85.

[132] Guite, '"Black Portuguese"', especially 689 and 692.

4.2.3 Harmony and Conflict

How was law and order maintained on a more day-to-day basis?[135] In the Ottoman world, much conflict broke out and was thus resolved within the *mahallas*, drawing on the resources of local elders and religious leaders (i.e., the *imam*, rabbi, or priest).[136] In the Mughal world, similarly, what disorder was not dealt with by the *kotwal* and his allies was the business of caste/craft *mahallas* themselves. These *mahallas* were 'headed by chiefs (*chaudhuris*) of caste councils (*panchayats*)' who settled quarrels within the neighbourhood and adjudicated disputes over property rights, yet also negotiated dues with city authorities and made provision for residents' security.[137] The growth of population, the weakening of feudal bonds of dependence and the better title to land attained by commoners, and the greater reach and role of the market in early modern times meant there was a substantial growth in litigation.[138] This was because competition over property and the entanglement of most social classes in credit/debt obligations (§3.4) meant people took to the courts as never before.[139]

The question of who owned the land may be a vexed one (§5.1.2), but it has not helped that scholarly attention has largely fixed on rights and entitlements – to the revenues from the land or to particular offices, their bestowal and renewal, their contestation and verification – rather than ownership *per se*.[140] As evidence of the existence and respect for private property, however, we find that Shah Jahan's orders for the construction of a new mosque in Agra in 1636–37 entailed the acquisition of land outside the *khalisa* (Crown estate) through purchase at prices 1.5 times its presumed value from certain proprietors (*malliks*), others preferring compensation in the form of buildings elsewhere.[141]

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[133] Chenoy, 'Shahjahanabad', 165.

[134] See, for instance: Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia*, especially 18–71.

[135] See, also: Gokhale, *Surat*, 51–71, for the anatomy of local government in a seventeenth-century Mughal city.

[136] Boyar and Fleet, *Social History*, 121–28.

[137] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 84.

[138] Muldrew, *Obligation*,16.

[139] The degree of 'legal accessibility' was a critical variable in this development, but was fairly high in early modern England, so that legal means could be taken up by people from across the social strata: ibid, especially 199–271. Evidence reviewed below suggests a similar picture holds for India.

[140] Using examples from the eighteenth-century Maratha state, Guha's 'Wrongs and Rights' surveys a variety of 'rights', while being attentive to matters of gender and status, as well as the use of violence in the exploitation of one's rights or the punishment of infringements.

[141] Moosvi, *People*, 202. Other evidence suggests *malliks* not only traded land amongst themselves, but also sold their land to the Mughal kings or entered disputes with him over the

Buying, selling, and deriving profit from property were not innovations of the colonial period.

But property transactions were not the sole preserve of Indian nobles, whose rights were probably the most tenuous – rather than the strongest – on account of the practice of escheat to prevent their accumulation of power.[142] Rather, there is plenty of evidence of the ownership and sale of private property (*milkiyat*, in Persian) existing more widely in early modern India, the study of which has very lately coalesced into a small but promising sub-field.[143] Property was seldom a mere economic asset that stored and (hopefully) appreciated in value, possessed by private individuals whose right of ownership permitted the exclusion of others from access or use.[144] Property was instead highly contingent and subjective, a feature deriving from its social – if not always public – character in the early modern world. A good example are *ghats* (riverside landings), which were used by pilgrims but also for trade, as sites of religious rituals but also for washing and bathing, and thus constructed by royalty and mercantile elites for motivations in excess of pecuniary gains.[145]

By delving into legal records surviving from the courts of local *qazis* in the Mughal realm, it is possible to find wills, gift-deeds, mortgage papers, and documents relating to the purchases of shops, houses, and land. These and other legal documents concerning disputes over property do not only pertain to patricians, but also bear the names of goldsmiths and other artisans, shopkeepers and merchants. Transactions required the consent and sureties of at least two influential and propertied members of the respective community or the residential *mahalla* before they could be signed and sealed by the *qazi*. This meant acquiring, bequeathing, and disposing of property was regulated not only by the state, but primarily by local powerholders, who played a critical part in such processes and made property transfers intra-community or even caste affairs.[146] Thus, property was not merely an economic asset, for it was also a 'social space', not merely 'an index of wealth, but a medium through which relations were maintained', Farhat Hasan shows.[147]

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matter of ownership: Habib, *Agrarian System*, 125. Of all groups, there is reason to believe that only Mughal nobles' property right was fragile, for they were forbidden from building up heritable wealth to the extent that land returned to the Crown estate after their death, possibly to be reallocated to another or retained by the emperor; see: Koch, 'Agra', for useful discussion. That said, nobles' property right entailed the emperor purchase their land prior to building the Taj Mahal, hence the delay before its construction started; see: Koch, *Taj Mahal*, 28, 97.

[142] Koch, 'Property Rights', 199–216, which includes discussion on the diversity of seventeenth-century escheat practices, which varied according to what and whose property were under consideration as well as the circumstances.

[143] Chaudhry, 'Repossessing Property'.

[144] For a critique of narrowly economistic ideas of property, see: Hasan, 'Property and Social Relations', here especially 853.

[145] Bhattacharya, *Empire and Ecology*, 56–57, 128.

[146] Hasan, 'Property and Social Relations', 859–66. See, also: Glover, *Lahore*, 15–16.

[147] Hasan, 'Property and Social Relations', 853.

A parallel system operated in the countryside whereby the *panch* (village leadership) was accountable in rural property transfers.[148] Staying in the town, however, we might locate one source of urban friction within the role of local powerholders in legal transfers of property so described. Another emerged from the 'distinction between "ownership" (*milkiyat*) and the "rights" (*haqq*) that one could claim from it', evidence of which Hasan finds in disputes presented to the *qazi* and thus articulated in the language of his court – *sharia*. An example brings this to life. In the 1630s, a Hindu woman's spouse purchased four shops attached to a mosque in Surat. In her view, under *sharia*, 'a transaction of sale (*bai*) provided to the purchaser an absolute and unconditional access to that which (s)he purchased.'[149] At stake was whether she could exercise her 'right' to collect rents from the shops she owned, which Muslim believers disputed. In their view, under *sharia*, the shops were an extension of the mosque, the mosque was entrusted to the community of believers, and thus the rights to rents belonged to the person in charge of the mosque. Thus, both 'sides to the conflict invoked *sharia*, and in seeking to protect their claims over the disputed shops, both the litigants appropriated *sharia* by manipulating its ambiguities and contradictions.'[150]

And finally, what of disorder? One cause for city authorities' concern was the restive potential of those who had fallen into vagabondage, although it is yet to be ascertained whether demobilised soldiers, disaffected students, and uprooted peasants were as much a problem for early modern Indian authorities as their Ottoman counterparts, who grappled with population influxes in the face of brigandage and insecurity in the countryside caused, most notably, by the Celali revolts in Anatolia following the onset of the Little Ice Age (§6.5).[151] Because of the city's openness and the populace's ease of mobility, another problem facing Indian authorities were those aggressive Hindu and Muslim mendicants – alone or in large groups – causing disturbances as they demanded alms.[152] But collective forms of protest and other expressions of discontent or dissent did not always emerge from the margins.[153]

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[148] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 148–52.

[149] Hasan, 'Property and Social Relations', 872.

[150] Ibid, 872.

[151] Faroqhi, *Towns*, 267–87; Boyar and Fleet, *Social History*, 106–16, for how the Istanbul authorities dealt with violent disorder; White, *Climate of Rebellion*, 163–226, for fresh analysis of the Celali Rebellion and its aftermath, and 249–75, for the associated urban explosion and resultant challenges.

[152] Sharma, 'The City', 63.

[153] See, also: Kaicker, *The King*, 157–65, for discussion of other kinds of urban disorder and conflict (e.g., those revolving around the honour of women, warring houses, or differences between communities).

4.2.4 Vox Populi

In contrast to research revealing the role of the *populi* in shaping the political order in early modern London, Paris, and Amsterdam, Istanbul, Cairo, and Damascus, Indian historians have hitherto either denied the possession of a political consciousness by early modern townsfolk, or else have read particular evidence and events too narrowly, reducing ordinary people to a mere rabble or armed mob that sporadically arose to press (economic) grievances or religious fanaticism (or both).[154] In a sweeping revisionism, Abhishek Kaicker turns attention squarely upon Shahjahanabad's quotidian inhabitants – 'from haughty jewellers to humble shoemakers, soldiers, obscure preachers, minor clerics, wandering mendicants, unnamed idlers, vagrants, vagabonds, and spectators.'[155] It may be true that Indian townsfolk were not so bonded through such corporate institutions as guilds and livery companies. Nor did they constitute municipal ones, although loose community organisations did exist and did increasingly make representation on behalf of members in the last pre-colonial centuries, be they caste/craft assemblies or ethno-religious groups (e.g., the Armenians), becoming ever more significant 'public arenas' as a result.[156] In this respect, Indian townsfolk differed, by degrees, from the varied experiences of their counterparts in other parts of the Islamic middle East and Africa, not to mention in Europe.[157] It may also be true that the Mughal regime 'had no conception of their place in politics' in its classical age.[158] Change was in the air, however, for the empire's ordinary subjects *were* stirred to articulate what can be called a 'popular politics' by the beginning of the eighteenth century, framed through their engagements with Mughal sovereignty.

Shahjahanabadis were expressing themselves in a manner like their contemporaries in Siam, who sought to reinstate Buddhism in sacralising kingship and to curtail foreign influence (French and Catholic influence, in particular). A courtier named Phetracha (r. 1688–1703) – backed by 'the monkhood and the mob' – succeeded in countering French arms and a palace coup that inaugurated a new dynasty in Ayutthaya.[159] Occurring in the same year as the Glorious Revolution in England, and described as a 'revolution' by Europeans, it was hardly a revolution in the sense we would understand it, for it reinstituted monarchical order and hence did not precipitate structural change in the political sphere. And yet, though it might seem regressive on the grounds of its clerical and monarchical bent, it represented a novel politicisation of Siamese clergy and society. As we shall see, ordinary Shahjahanabadis also articulated their newfound political voice *within* – rather than *against* – existing yet evolving discourses and institutions of kingship. As in Siam, furthermore, a signal event in the longer-term process of ordinary Shahjahanabadis' awakening was their response to foreign influence – occasioned, in this case, by Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739.

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[154] Ibid, 2–6, for such a critical reading of Indian historiography, and 256–90 for analysis of the extraordinary events of 1729.

[155] Ibid, 4.

[156] See, for example: Gokhale, *Surat*, 47–49. More recently, again on western India: O'Hanlon, 'Petitioning', which reveals the 'public' dimension of *panchayats* as they evolved over the long eighteenth century to supersede earlier corporate bodies.

[157] The implications of these differences are scrutinised in §5.3. Boyar and Fleet, *Social History*, explores the denizens of Istanbul's relationship to the sultan and the ruling centre and may thus be a useful beginning for comparison with Mughal India.

[158] Kaicker, *The King*, 2.

[159] On these events, see, most recently: Strathern, 'Thailand's First Revolution', including 1315, for citation, and especially 1315–18, on the autonomous political agency of the people.

Kaicker argues that a broad spectrum of the Mughal elite had by this time become indifferent as to who sat on the throne, some even favouring a new dynasty. Men holding such views included Raja Jugal Kishor, a high-ranking financial administrator and representative of the *subadar* (provincial governor) of Bengal at the imperial court, and Burhan al-Mulk, the *subadar* of Awadh.[160] They were more fearful of the scarcely incorporated peoples of the region around Delhi who showed scant regard for Mughal authority (namely, the Jats, Gujars, Minas, Meos, and Mewatis), than they were of Nadir Shah and his army.[161] The latter could be bargained with, after all, either by offering him a one-off payment (as came to pass) or the throne itself (as some were willing to do). Such bargaining could be peacefully executed according to mutually understood norms and rituals, not least because Iranian émigrés like Burhan al-Mulk possessed cultural, linguistic, and kinship links spanning the Mughal world and Iran; the same could not be said of the uncontained looting and destruction of the city that might be unleashed by the empire's restless and refractory groups, who were held in contempt by such elites.[162]

Upon securing a victory, Nadir Shah agreed with the Mughal elite that his entry into Shahjahanabad would be conducted in a way not to provoke unrest. The city's common folk were neither as eager nor as willing to acquiesce to the victors as the Mughal elites, however, for they *did* care who sat on the throne and because rule by 'a scion of the Timurid dynasty was central to the[ir] conception of a just political order', Kaicker argues.[163] The resulting backlash was decades-long in the making, the culmination of the reformulation of sovereignty and the king's relationship to the people started in Aurangzeb's times. Imperial sovereignty had long been anchored in the dispensation of justice, whether through the audience granted by the emperor to petitioners or the proper functioning of courts throughout the realm. In Aurangzeb's time, personal audiences did not cease, but there was, Kaicker reminds us, a 'bureaucratic systemisation of the delivery of justice' via the appointment of public censors (*muhtasibs*), a new office created in 1659 and recruited from among the *ulama* (§7.3.3).[164] We might think of them as akin to the *corregidors* in the Spanish Empire or those Ottoman authorities tasked with managing food supply and prices and generally regulating the market and (conspicuous) consumption.[165]

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[160] Kaicker, *The King*, 25.

[161] The Meos' raids and recalcitrance to central authority was not new, for it had already been recorded as a problem facing the fourteenth-century Delhi Sultans: Aquil, 'Chishti Sufis', 440.

[162] Kaicker, *The King*, 26–32.

[163] Ibid, 21.

Because of the centrality of justice to the discourse of imperial sovereignty, Aurangzeb's transformation of the former served to make the latter 'less dependent on his mystical nature and more on the law, broadening its sweep and intensifying its reach across the empire.'[166] In some places, this change provided a framework of reference (the *sharia*) and process (interaction with the *qazi's* court) that empowered the merchants and middling sorts of the empire's towns and cities, thereby facilitating their incorporation within the imperial system as never before – something seen in Farhat Hasan's work on urban property, too. As for the city's ordinary folk, they felt empowered 'to act upon their interpretation of justice according to the law', to the extent that a new discourse of sovereignty/justice stimulated a newfound political engagement – 'popular politics' – the content and tenor of which wavered between craving and criticising Mughal rule and between agreeing with and departing from the opinions of Mughal theologians, bureaucrats and other state representatives, and the nobility.[167]

Those subjects previously regarded as passive and with no place in politics by the Mughal regime had become politically engaged and active; eager and willing to stand up for their *padshah* and the ideal of sovereignty that had hitherto structured their lives yet was abrogated most heinously when the Sayyid brothers orchestrated a regicide in1719 and again after Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739. Elsewhere beyond Europe, commoners were finding their political voice around this time in a similar manner: in Siam, as already noted, but also in Osaka in the 1720s and 1730s, for instance, where merchants and artisans formed new organisational groupings to remonstrate against the state's exactions, its intrusion into the market, and eventually larger matters of urban governance.[168] Yet, we might pause to ask *how* the political views (and actions) of Shahjahanabad's quotidian denizens came to be shaped, and what enabled the development of a popular politics at this time. Art was one ingredient. Another was the use of public space. 'The forked tongue of poetry, equally capable of sweetness as of poison,' Kaicker observes, 'mirrors the dual nature of the politics of the people who recited it in the city', for it was 'as capable of launching to the king's defence as challenging his right to rule.'[169] Traces of a more critical stance are found in popular satire from the time, such as the work of Niʿmat Khan-i ʿAli ('The Sublime') and the more refined Mir Jaʿfar Zatalli ('The Prattler').[170] There was also another duality, that of private/elite and public/commoner – a duality increasingly traversed by some performers whose 'mimicry of elites surely had a sharper edge when conducted in the square before crowds of jeering commoners.'[171]

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[164] Ibid, 107. See, also: Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 174–75. Singh, *Town*, 148–68, provides a rich survey of market administration by the *kotwal* and *mutasaddis*, noting the latter's overlap with *muhtasibs* and *mir-i mahallas*.

[165] Kaicker, *The King*, 107, for citation; Boyar and Fleet, *Social History*, 158–204, on their Ottoman counterparts.

[166] Kaicker, *The King*, 107.

[167] Ibid, 147–48.

[168] Kusuo, 'Protest'.

[169] Kaicker, *The King*, 145.

4.3 Urban Cultures

Travel accounts attest to Shahjahanabad's return to normalcy following the tumult and destruction caused in 1739. But things would never quite be the same.[172] Because defeat at the hands of Nadir Shah's forces wrought a real and a symbolic blow to the Mughal centre, one impact was to accelerate decentralisation and even the dissolution of the empire. In this context, and with the memory of both the wealth to be had in the Mughal north and the scope for bargaining or even collaborating with the Mughal elite, Nadir Shah's former general, Ahmad Shah, launched a series of campaigns from Afghanistan into Mughal territories. In 1757, he entered Shahjahanabad and eventually departed with carts laden with treasure, but not before driving the emperor out of the walled city (Alamgir II was later murdered on the back of not only the Afghan, but also a Maratha invasion and sacking of the city).[173] In 1761, having defeated the Marathas at Panipat, Ahmad Shah installed one of his Indo-Afghan collaborators as governor while the Mughal ruler lived in the safety of self-imposed 'exile' in Awadh. This lasted until 1770, when an opportunity arose for Shah Alam to return to the throne, though the empire had withered to the environs of Delhi and the city itself was by all accounts dilapidated and impoverished.[174]

4.3.1 Consumerism and Sociability

Maybe the greatest transformation of urban life in early modern times occurred within the cultural sphere. In Europe, the period from the late fifteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century 'saw the final consecration of a distinctive metropolitan and genteel lifestyle' as 'the city turned into the main stage of consumer change and cultural innovation.'[175] Its motor was those very same processes also at work beyond Europe, so it is no surprise that its effects were comparable to those witnessed elsewhere in the world, too. Across early modern Afro-Eurasia, the growth of commerce not only powered urbanisation; it also gave shape to the consumer society most readily found in towns and cities.[176] The prosperity derived from commerce animated consumer society into being, but there were other contributing factors: as cultural and artisanal production was to an extent unshackled from patron-client relations through the advent of markets for such things, so their consumption was opened to a wider range of people in a wider range of forms and in a wider range of settings.[177]

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[170] Here, see the analysis offered by Hasan in *Paper*, 67–95, of satirical and poetic literature openly about, for instance, the practice of sodomy by political elites as a way of attacking 'an oppressive sovereign, a corrupt *qazi*, or an inefficient *kotwal*' (*op. cit*, 81).

[171] Kaicker, *The King*, 141.

[172] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 163.

[173] Lally, 'Beyond "Tribal Breakout"', 381–84.

[174] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 167.

[175] Blondé and Van Damme, 'Early Modern Europe', 251. Compare the portrait of the cultural scene offered in this section with developments described by Clark in *European Cities*, 179–99.

Thus, by the eighteenth century, both the high- and low-born inhabitants of Shahjahanabad had more opportunities to consume news, theological debate, and various kinds of entertainments (poetry of numerous sorts, song and dance, satire and performances by jesters and mimics), much of which carried at least an undertone of political commentary. There seems to have been a *décloisonnement* of urban culture, much as there was in the Ottoman world, but perhaps a little less than in Tokugawa Japan, that helped rouse a new urban political consciousness.[178] This cultural scene encompassed a variety of performers (from those asking for small sums in recompense, to those of great renown and celebrity), and took place in a wider range of venues than previously (from elite gatherings in private residences known as *mehfils* and *majalis*, to public performances at coffeehouses, *chawks* and bazaars, in the precincts of mosques, *dargahs*, and *khanaqahs*).[179] Hardly confined to the private household, therefore, urban culture and its consumption permeated public space, where it helped shift behavioural norms and social codes of conduct to give form to the Indo-Islamicate *ashraf*, the cousin of the European burgher or bourgeois.[180]

With the march of commercialisation and globalisation, the early moderns gained greater access to an increasing range and variety of (new) goods, stirring new attitudes to consumption, luxury, sensory pleasure, and recreation.[181]

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[176] See, for instance: Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, especially 117–308.

[177] See, for instance: Lemire, *Consumer Cultures*. C.A. Bayly, in *Empire and Information*, 192–96, not only described the range of venues where 'literature' could be 'consumed' in performance, but also noted, on the authorship/production side of things, the array of social types involved, from druggists, apothecaries, tailors, dancing girls, and serving women, to Hindus of Brahman, Kayastha, and Khatri communities, *ashraf* Muslims, and even Eurasians.

[178] Kaicker, *The King*, 123–46; Francks, *Japanese Consumer*, 1–46.

[179] Such was the importance of marketplaces to public life, and of commercial elites to urban communities, that a critical religious debate among Delhi's Sikh assembly at a turning point in the history of the Sikh *panth* took place not in any temple precinct but in a bazaar: Syan, 'Debating Revolution', 1110–16.

[180] Blondé and Van Damme, 'Early Modern Europe', 252–53. *Bourgeois* and *ashraf* were similarly unstable terms, in that they held slightly different meanings and valence in different places and at different times. Both terms, despite encompassing different groups and demarcating different social relations, nevertheless shifted their meaning in tandem with the development of consumer society.

[181] See: Rüstem, *Ottoman Baroque*, 32, for the testimony of a French visitor to the Ottoman court concerning such new attitudes, and Salzmann, 'Age of Tulips', for a global purview upon these

Stimulants like coffee (from the Red Sea arena) and tobacco (from the New World) are prime examples.[182] Their rapidly spreading consumption brought about an early modern 'psychoactive revolution', although perhaps more so in the West, for their use in Asia slotted into an established culture of consuming stimulants such as alcohol, opium, and cannabis products.[183] Coffee beans from the Ethiopian highlands were being roasted and decocted into a drink in Yemen by the fifteenth century. Coffee drinking spread from there via the port of Mocha through the Ottoman lands during the sixteenth century and then to the lands of the Ottomans' trading partners in Europe and in Asia – not least Iran, where coffee had an important place in Safavid courtly culture, and India.[184] The spread of coffeehouses in London and throughout provincial cities and towns in England in the seventeenth century is well known. These coffeehouses have long been mythologised for their contribution to genteel sociability and to the scientific and political Enlightenment, omitting their role in fomenting sedition. They were, furthermore, often as filthy as the streets outside, housing vice and all manner of criminality – a fact too often overlooked.[185] Their progenitor, nevertheless, was the Ottoman coffeehouse, which had created a new place – besides the home, hammam, mosque, public square, or shop – for social intercourse, for trading gossip and hearing news, and for politics, to the extent that some Ottoman gentlemen hurried to their local establishment in their pyjamas.[186]

Smoking tobacco, by contrast, did not create new venues for sociability, instead being enjoyed by men *and* women from across the social classes in bathhouses and coffeehouses, in public squares and in gardens, at home and on the move throughout the Ottoman world. Smoking did, however, engender a rich material culture. Surprisingly, perhaps, 'pyric technologies' did not move with tobacco from the New World to Europe and the rest of the world, but instead made their way from sub-Saharan Africa via south Asia, where water pipes and cannabis-smoking pipes already extant morphed into the *nargileh* or *huqqa* and pipes for smoking tobacco (Fig. 4F).[187] Tobacco use was challenged by those clergy and other social commentators who deemed it immoral, on account of its intoxicating effects and its very broad appeal, but spread to such

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trends. Such were these developments that moral critiques of decadence were issued by contemporaries; see, for instance: Grehan, 'Smoking'.

[182] Lemire, *Consumer Cultures*, 190–247, on tobacco consumption around the world.

[183] For analyses focussing on Iran: Kazemi, 'Drugs'; Kazemi, 'Tobacco'.

[184] Matthee, *Pleasure*, 144–74, on coffee, with other chapters examining tobacco, opium, and wine.

[185] Lincoln, *London*, 164–80.

[186] An excellent and concise connected and comparative history of Ottoman and European coffeehouses, their ownership and clientele, and their cultural and political role can be found in Kirli, 'Coffeehouses', which also emphasises the blur – rather than the hard boundary – between the public and private spheres in the early modern world produced by such spaces.

[187] Breen, 'Pyrrhic Technologies', for this complication of the neatness of the 'Columbian Exchange' revealing just how interconnected and complex the early modern world was.

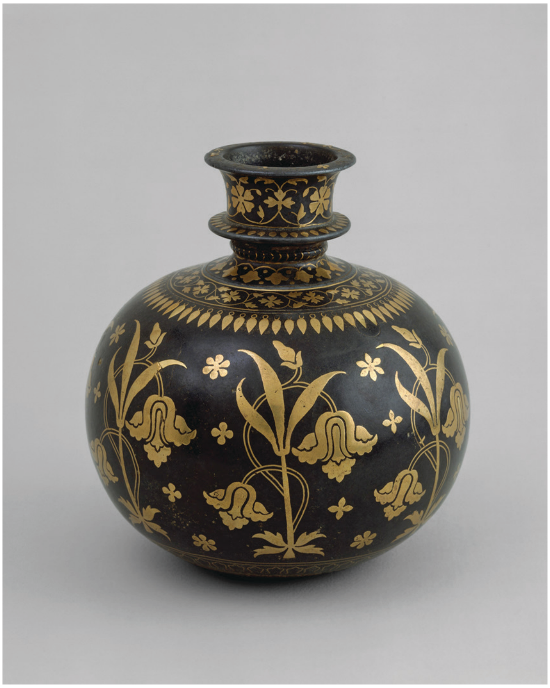

Fig. 4F Base for a *Huqqa* with a Design of Irises and Other Flowers (zinc alloy and inlaid brass; Bidar; late seventeenth century)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1984.221

an extent that it became 'a key factor in the breakdown of old moral strictures' that shaped a distinctly early modern 'public culture of fun' – out in the open, routine, and unrestricted.[188]

Shahjahanabad, too, had its fair share of coffeehouses, which served similar purpose to those elsewhere, although we know less about them.[189] Smoking a pipe had become common in Gujarat by the end of the seventeenth century, cheroots were liked by the 'poorer sort' in the Coromandel, and the habit seems to have been spreading in north India, too.[190] Besides the new accoutrements and new venues for the consumption of particular things were the parts of the city given over to pleasure – the 'floating world' (*ukiyo*) to be found in Edo, and notably in its red-light district of Yoshiwara, with its counterparts in the lively bustle around Isfahan's royal square, Istanbul's Galata district and the Grand

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[188] Greehan, 'Smoking', citations 1377 and 1375, respectively.

[189] See: Kaicker, *The King*, 28–29, 108, 138.

[190] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 107.

Bazaar, and Shahjahanabad's Chandni Chowk.[191] Consumer society, as all this indicates, was more usually urban than rural and decisively moulded urban (popular) culture; so apparent was this to one writer in seventeenth-century China, in fact, that he described the pleasures and corrupting effects of commodification and the money-driven ethos of the city in a major prose work.[192]

A new 'way of seeing' emerged in the early modern Islamicate empires; it was moored in the engagements of learned men with knowledges particular to Europe and the Islamic world, yet was really made manifest in towns and cities. Amalgamating with the new disposition to leisure, the effect was to change the use of urban space and spatial encounters – whether in new cities like Shahjahanabad, new suburbs like Saʿdabad (built in Istanbul's environs in 1722), or simply in the (re)design of mansions, gardens, squares, and other structures – in ways comparable to developments even in quite different cultural-intellectual ecumenes, such as Edo in Japan.[193] Much like Mughal Agra, Isfahan's suburban development on the Zayandehrud (river) and at Farahabad were riverside; a vista and a way of looking were integral to their existence.[194] Similarly, Isfahan's Khaju and Allahvirdikhan bridges, the Nurabad bridge on the road from Agra to Gwalior, the Shahi bridge in Jaunpur, and Edo's Nihonbashi were not merely river crossings but places of congregation and thus of sociability. Occasionally, these bridges were used for royal functions and spectacle. Mostly, however, they were used by the local public for *sayrgah* (a place for leisure and excursion) – for taking in the riverine views from bastions that were a conscious part of the bridges' design, and thus for cultivating a genteel sensibility through seeing and while being seen.[195]

4.3.2 Writing about the Changing City

Delhi may have been repeatedly abandoned but was never still; its history was repeatedly stirred up, so that looking back to its past was a wellspring of its cultural dynamism.[196] The new city-within-a-city that was Shahjahanabad, too, never became fixed in aspic in 1648, even as certain elements of its physical makeup became 'codified' or served as role models for later builders (§9.3.1). Rather, its cityscape was soon changing, and in ways echoing the transformation of the empire itself. A number of new mosques were constructed within the walled city and its environs from the beginning of the eighteenth century, including: Zinat al-Masjid (1707), south of the Red Fort, sponsored by Princess

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[191] Burke, 'Patterns', 125.

[192] Berg, 'Marvelling'.

[193] Rüstem, *Ottoman Baroque*, 26–55. Boyar and Fleet, *Social History*, 205–48, on leisure and pleasure in Istanbul and Saʿdabad.

[194] Hosseini, 'Bridges', especially 113–15.

[195] Ibid, especially 108, 111, 119, 121. The construction of beautiful bridges was not limited to the Mughal world; see, for those of Masulipatnam: Sharma, 'The City', 37.

[196] Frykenburg, 'Introduction'.

Zinat al-Nisa; Sunahri Masjid (1721–22), on Chandni Chowk, sponsored by Raushan al-Daula; Fakhr al-Masajid (1728–29), in the north of the city, sponsored by the noblewoman Fakhr al-Nisa; and two mosques sponsored in the mid-century by Qudsiya Begum, a wife of Muhammad Shah. Mosque construction was no longer a solely royal affair, but increasingly sponsored by noblemen and noblewomen. Yet, their mosques' visual and architectural references – and also those of *madrasas* constructed in this period – were borrowed from the Jami Masjid, the imperial mosque constructed in Shah Jahan's time (Fig. 4E), so that 'even as the centrality of the imperial monuments was challenged' by the new urban elites, Chanchal Dadlani reveals, 'the visual language of Mughal imperial power' was reinforced by 'constructing new projects in the image of imperial icons.'[197]

Dargah Quli Khan visited Delhi in the late 1730s in the service of Asaf Jah I of Hyderabad. His travel narrative, the *Muraqqa-yi Dihli* ('Delhi Album'), snapshotted in words this changing life of the city – life that formerly centred on the palace-fortress but gradually resituated on a diffusion of public and semi-public spaces patronised by the urban elite. His text rendered the essential changes of the late Mughal period at large – namely, the changing balance of power between the emperor and other powerholders, between the centre and periphery (§7.4) – through a 'distinctly urbanistic' frame.[198] Shahjahanabad and its imperial architecture thus played a similar role to that of Istanbul vis-à-vis the great Ottoman cities in the Arab provinces (Aleppo, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus), in Anatolia (Amasya, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Kütahya, Manisa, Trabzon), and in Rumelia (Belgrade, Edirne, Thessaloniki). Istanbul, like Shahjahanabad, was the central reference point for these and other cities – a role that was enhanced, rather than diminished, amidst decentralisation.

Even more striking is how this steadily changing cityscape interacted with a new kind of spatial consciousness. Evidence of this can be found in the *Ardhakathanak*, the vernacular-language autobiographical verse work of Banarasi Das, a Jain merchant who lived around the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries in the Jaunpur Sultanate and in Agra. This work suggests the bent toward 'urban ethnography' discerned by Sunil Sharma was not merely an Indo-Persianate literary affect.[199] A well-known Persian-language example of this 'urban ethnography' can be found in those parts of the *Chahar Chaman* penned by Chandar Bhan Brahman during Shah Jahan's reign that richly evoke the hustle and bustle of urban life in Shahjahanabad and Lahore through descriptions of its boulevards and bazaars, gardens and shrines, and other public spaces.[200]

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[197] Dadlani, *From Stone*, 73, for citation, and 71–72, for the discussion from which these examples are drawn.

[198] Ibid, 73–80.

[199] Sharma, 'The City', 39, 44, for details of the text.

[200] Kinra, *Writing*, 7–8, 135–58.

Perhaps the most famous example is Dargah Quli Khan's *Muraqqa*. Through its text, the reader encounters the city's performers and artistes – rendered in a series of literary portraits – to relive the narrator's experiences of religious and secular congregation, of recreation and entertainment, not least performances of music and poetry lasting from evening to daybreak. Yet, the *Muraqqa* also 'underscores the symbiotic relationship between new 'physical interventions in the city's urban fabric and new urban practices' by the eighteenth century, for the narrator's encounters and experiences 'are framed through visits to a range of architectural monuments and public spaces' (e.g., squares, streets, bazaars, mosques, Sufi *dargahs* and lodges), which were sites of urban patronage by nobles and other elites.[201] There are also numerous references to shops and traders and the visual and sensory pleasure associated with the riches of the city's consumer society.

In all this, such literature may be compared with those 'urban guidebooks' starting to emerge in Tokugawa Japan. These described – even celebrated – work and leisure in the city, sometimes for the benefit of visitors and thus replete with details of the sights and the best shops.[202] Urban praise, a new commercial sensibility, and the pursuit of pleasure amalgamated in visual terms, too, about which Ottomanists are amply aware and historians of the late Mughal world are beginning to make clear.[203] Several factors combined to produce a new kind of visualisation of urban space in early eighteenth-century Udaipur (Mewar), including: seventeenth-century verse and visual reworkings of Indic aesthetic theory (§9.3.3) and the classical literary ideals of cities (*nagara*-*varnana*) as found in the *Ramayana*, for instance; urban growth as well as new cartographic practices (§10.4), which prompted kings and painters in their employ to look anew at their locales around the early eighteenth century; and the work of eighteenth-century court poets, like Kavi Nandram, and travelling Jain monk poets, like Yati Jaichandand Kavi Khetal, which celebrated urban centres. The result was a new large-format medium in which artists 'represented real spaces as charismatic places' by capturing their idealised *bhavas* or moods, Dipti Khera tells us.[204]

That said, contemporary *writing* on early modern Indian towns and cities can be distinguished from that found in other places.[205] In south Germany, where urban life revolved around numerous small cities and which was heavily urbanised by contemporary European standards, the *Bürger* (the *bourgeois*, or citizens) possessed a developed and proud civic identity and a literary flair. In celebration of their cities, they churned out historical works that stand as evidence of their participation in historiographical production.[206] Elsewhere, too, civic pride stimulated a rich corpus of city chronicles and urban histories or antiquarian surveys into being from the fifteenth century. The genre emerged in Italy: Rome was the subject of Flavio Biondo's 1444 work, followed by works on Ravenna, Brescia, and other places. It then spread to Spain (Valencia, Toledo), France (Paris, Nimes, Lyons), and to England (London, Exeter). By c. 1600, according to Peter Burke, there were thirty or so such works in print with the number rising rapidly over the coming centuries.[207] Besides its pedigree and growing popularity, urban literature was also highly varied. Focussing on early modern Barcelona, James S. Amelang typologises several kinds of city writing: city chronicles, travel accounts, encomia, chorographies, guidebooks, administrative guides, colloquies or dialogues, literary descriptions (in ballads, poems, stories), ephemera (e.g., news sheets, festival pamphlets, protest literature), personal reflections (in diaries and memoirs). Some writers took an ambulatory perspective, others an aerial one, perhaps climbing to the top of a tower or spire to look down upon the cityscape.[208]

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[201] Dadlani, *From Stone*, 73.

[202] Burke, 'Patterns', 114; Francks, *Japanese Consumer*, 43–45.

[203] See: Fetvacı, *Album*, especially 110–29.

[204] Khera, *Moods*, here 7, and also 27–116, 147–72.

[205] The later Middle Ages saw a flourishing of urban cultural identity and associated literary production: Clark, *European Cities*, 82–85. On travel literature and other writing about Beijing, which was very long-standing by the late Ming, see: Naquin, *Peking*, 249–83, 451–98.

In the Islamic near East, however, medieval and later writers folded descriptions of the city (such as Baghdad, Cairo, or Damascus) into larger histories.[209] In the Indo-Persianate world, too, writing about the city was generally to be found nestled in monumental or universal histories, court chronicles, and royal biographies in prose and poetry. Such excursion into the city celebrated its buildings and its inhabitants' achievements – in commerce, cultural diversity, and the travails of daily life – to give a rich yet sweeping picture of the urban fabric. Such works thus provided readers with an ethnographic and a topographical tour of the city – in the sense of relating the city's different people and occupations, and its places and buildings, respectively.[210]

A literary topos with roots in classical Persian, works of *shahrangiz* (literally, 'enlivening the town') or *shahrashub* ('upsetting' or 'disturbing the town') have been described as city poems.[211] 'Beginning in the sixteenth century', Sunil Sharma observes, such poems 'were written about every major urban centre in the Persianate world' from the Ottoman lands to India, 'either as longer narratives in the *masnavi* form or as short unconnected poems organised around a city and a patron.'[212] By contrast to their counterparts, Indo-Persian poets provided less ethnographic detail – that is, little or no detailed information about crafts, guilds, and business jargon – instead favouring to paint more of an urban panorama while praising a city's diversity. Their works often had a (homo)erotic flavour, weaving 'commerce and love in the form of addresses to different craftsmen and youths' that gave glimpses into bazaar life 'against the backdrop of a specific location.'[213] These poems have an important place in contemporary writing about Indian cities, on account of the high degree of intertextuality between such poems and other literary forms, and an even more special place in the history of Shahjahanabad, in particular.[214] An important break occurred in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, when Persian began to give way to Urdu, and a panegyric mode (*shahrangiz*) gave way to a nostalgic lament of the ruined city (*shahrashub*).[215] Poets such as Sauda and Mir – the *noms de plume* of Mirza Muhammad Rafi (1730–80) and Muhammad Taqi Mir (1722–1810) – witnessed Shahjahanabad's desecration in 1739 and 1757, their verses mourning corruption and the city's decline.[216]

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[206] Wolfart, 'Global Yokels'.

[207] Burke, 'Culture', 446.

[208] Amelang, *Writing Cities*, 1–40.

[209] Burke, 'Culture', 447.

[210] Sharma, 'Urban Ethnography'.

[211] Sharma, 'City of Beauties', here 80.

[212] Sharma, 'Urban Ethnography', 242, for citation; Sharma, 'City of Beauties', 74–75 for discussion of Deccani examples.

At work was a mixture of pessimism and historical reflexion also to be found in subsequent writing in new genres. Even in a cosmopolitan capital like Delhi, the advent of what we might today call urban history and urban antiquarianism came only in the nineteenth century.[217] Elsewhere, too, the development was slow and the impetus came not from a sense of civic pride, *per se*, but as an outgrowth of gentry culture. *Qasbahs* were not singularly Muslim places yet, as C.A. Bayly noted, they frequently had an 'Islamic flavour' and served as the 'repository of aristocratic and courtly values', especially in post-Mughal north India.[218] *Qasbatis* thus became important patrons of arts, culture, and religious and intellectual debate through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so that *ashrafs* began to identify their genealogy with the history of such places. Only in the wake of 1857, and the confrontation with Muslim cultural loss, however, did a sense of nostalgia result in works primarily of genealogy tied to particular towns gradually giving way to what can be called urban history proper (albeit written for or from the perspective of certain *ashraf* families and communities). A *qasbah's* distinctive character – fashioned by generations of elite cultural patronage – thus began to be celebrated at the very moment it became palpably endangered.[219]

4.4 Conclusion

If the generation of 1739 had cause for lament, those who survived the ravages of 1857 experienced an even more profound grief. In the course of the Indian

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[213] Sharma, 'Urban Ethnography' 242.

[214] Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 89–124.

[215] On the classical models upon which the later poets could draw their inspiration, see: Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 165–66.

[216] Ibid, 165–66.

[217] Dadlani, *From Stone*, 166–73. Sayyid Ahmad Khan's encyclopaedic *Asar as-Sanadid* ('Monuments of Rulers'), first published in 1847, has been located within the kinds of poetic-cum-historical works described above.

[218] Bayly, *Rulers*, 348.

[219] Rahman, *Qasbah Towns*, especially 52–92. See, also: Khan, 'Local Pasts'.

Rebellion, but particularly in its aftermath, large parts of Delhi were torn down by the British to give them clear line of fire from the Qila Mubarak – or Red Fort, as it came to be called – in case of further uprising. Despite this persistent fear of another rebellion, the British could not resist Delhi's symbolism as a historic royal centre. The King-Emperor was crowned at a grand *durbar* on an open expanse in 1911, a year before an entirely new city – New Delhi – was commissioned just south of Shahjahanabad (nowadays called 'Old Delhi').[220]

Several decades old now, Stephen P. Blake's highly innovative study of Shahjahanabad paints a rich picture of the city, its inner life, and its meanings, at the same time pushing back against the view of Asian capitals as the 'great amorphous agglomerations' described by Marx, Weber, and colonial writers.[221] They 'were no doubt different from the cities of medieval Europe', Blake writes, 'but they were not formless, undifferentiated globs of villagers, ready to dissolve at a moment.'[222] The scholarship of a new generation of scholars has been attentive to such matters as the city-dwellers' interaction with the law or their participation in politics, consumerism, the conception and use of space, and so forth, as testified by material in this chapter. They have not only given credence to Blake's arguments but rendered them in new and more sophisticated ways, and in so doing, reversed the long neglect of urban settings and disinterest in town life as the other side of historians' favouring rural settings and themes.[223]

Yet, we might usefully dwell a moment on the distinctiveness found on the Indian subcontinent and the divergence from the urban experience elsewhere. Towns were founded on seigneurial initiative across the medieval and early modern world, although aided by commercial actors in many respects and contexts. The 'commercialisation of royal power' (§5.4.4) in eighteenth-century India not only widened the role of merchants in the processes underpinning the growth and proliferation of towns, but also granted them a more direct role in the establishment of *qasbahs*. The significance of this peculiar relationship becomes apparent against the backdrop of other transitions. Imperial expansion and centralisation from the late sixteenth century furthered a much longer process of urbanisation across swathes of India, resulting in the growth of primate cities (Lahore, Agra, Delhi) as well the growth of other secondary cities and large and small towns in both size and number.

Imperial decentralisation and collapse did not send this process into reverse so much as redistribute urban populations: the dynastic capitals of old kingdoms and new successor states in many places experienced a sustained growth thanks to the windfall from declining centres (especially the primate cities, but also other secondary cities), yet many secondary cities and larger towns shrank at the expense of small marketing towns (*qasbahs*) and larger villages.[224] India thus differed from England, say, where an 'urban Renaissance' arrived only in the century or so prior to the Industrial Revolution, fairly late relative to other parts of Europe and Asia surveyed here and thus idiosyncratic, but where growth and transformation ultimately favoured provincial and newly commercially significant centres at the expense of numerous small towns.[225] Unlike England, trends on the Indian subcontinent at the same time included deepening rurbanisation and not the stricter separation of rural and urban places. Unwittingly, Indian merchants supported a development that saw the compacting and turning-inward of states and markets at a time when their counterparts elsewhere facilitated their deepening and outward expansion.

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[220] Metcalf, 'Architecture and Empire'.

[221] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, xiv.

[222] Ibid, xv.

[223] See: Kaicker, *The King*, 2, however, for a pithy statement of the limitations of even the more recent scholarship.

A turning inward can also be detected in other respects. Shahjahanabad's cityscape may have been changing, but the city's finest buildings were built in a historically reflexive mode, referencing great buildings of the *past*, while the dwellings of the poorer classes were of the same primitive construction by the end of our period as they had been a century or more prior. Cities were a subject of Indian literary and historiographical production, to be sure, but works explicitly and unequivocally dedicated to celebrating the *genius urbis* only began appearing toward the very end of our period, spurred not so much by the pride in what was extant but nostalgia for what had been or else was endangered. Consumer society, too, had a belated advent or else was shallower than in other parts of the world, including swathes of the Islamic near and middle East, Europe, and Japan. All this, moreover, derives from scholarship on the north and only from a few locales, at that; how south India fits into this picture, if at all, has yet to be properly fleshed out.

At the level of the neighbourhood, the lives of Indian urbanites were structured by similar institutions to those elsewhere in Asia and Europe – namely, resort by magistrates to community leaders in the resolution of disputes, community-organised policing, and so forth.[226] On a broader level, however, there were important differences of Indian towns and cities from those elsewhere in Eurasia. City government in early modern Asia was often the task of officeholders appointed by a monarch or ruler, whereas in Europe an array of institutions and collective bodies fought to check monarchical intrusion and maintain the autonomy of towns and cities and their inhabitants, one side effect of which is the far richer range of material for the study of European as opposed to Asian centres.[227] Citizenship and elections also distinguished the political culture and role of European from Asian towns and cities.[228] Evidence of the stirrings of a popular politics means we can dispel the notion of the Indian masses as everywhere lacking either a voice or a role in political affairs, yet ordinary Shahjahanabadis' limited citizenship, their conception of sovereignty that revolved around the figure of the king, and thus their narrow expectations of government strike one as archaic. The events of 1739 are not only peculiar when set against something as singularly extraordinary as the storming of the Bastille in Paris a half century later, but in light of the persistence of Mughal government more or less unchanged in form from that of the classical age when the Ottoman and other European states were steadily transformed through the course of the seventeenth century.

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[224] For a nuanced picture of the 'twilight' in Delhi and Agra, see: Bayly, 'Delhi', 228–35.

[225] Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*.

[226] Friedrichs, 'Eurasian City', 48–50.

[227] For an indicative but hardly exhaustive summary of the differences in source material around the world, see: Burke, 'Culture', 438–39. The argument here is not to breathe fresh life into Max Weber's differentiation of European from Islamic cities on the grounds of corporate self-governance in the former versus its absence in the latter. Such ideas were not rooted in evidence, as Eldem *et al* argue in *Ottoman City*, 1–16.

Corporate interests nowhere in south Asia resembled those found in the City of London (the ancient capital's financial centre).[229] Its wealthy and powerful livery companies – such as the Mercer's or the Merchant Taylors – not only looked after their members' interests into old age, not only played a part in local governance and cultural life (feasts, annual celebrations like the Lord Mayor's Day), not only set the standards of particular trades throughout the land, and not only laid the foundations for England's growing empire of trade and colonisation (in Virginia and Ulster). They also had the clout to variously court and counterbalance the power and authority of the king and government in the City of Westminster (London's political centre), as so spectacularly came to a head in years leading up to Charles I's execution and the establishment of the short-lived Commonwealth (1649–60).[230]

Institutions of political representation existed even in east-central Europe, where early modern urbanisation may have been weaker in pace and character than to the west but was certainly in motion (more so in the Polish lands, less so in Hungary). On the European periphery, urbanisation was linked to economic change, immigration of outsiders from as far afield as Italy and Scotland, and the confessional conflicts of the (Counter-)Reformation, together unleashing new pressures upon relatively 'closed' urban societies. On the one hand, these created new tensions, testing and transforming medieval institutions of civic governance. On the other hand, this was fiercely curbed by conservative central states, which financed military expansionism via exactions from the urban sector even as they trampled much of the political and administrative autonomy of towns and cities granted by medieval charters.[231] In India over the long- and medium-term, by contrast, rulers could collect sufficient agrarian revenues or tap the wealth accumulated in central and provincial treasuries to obviate against a reliance on bankers, corporate bodies, or urban patriciates for cash to wage war (before c. 1700, at least).[232] The cooperation of such groups was necessary to establish and maintain imperial rule, but the state's demand upon such groups was within a much narrower range.[233] They also intruded little into confessional matters by necessity.

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[228] Friedrichs, 'Eurasian City', 30–31, 34–36, for these differences, and 37–43, for evidence from China, the Ottoman world, and Mughal India that puts paid to the view of Asian city-dwellers as passive victims of elite indifference.

[229] *C.f.* Friedrichs, 'Eurasian City', 47 and nn.36–38.

[230] Lincoln, *London*, especially 35–47, 85–86, 103–14, 131–47.

[231] Miller, *Urban Societies*, which additionally provides a much-needed survey of east-central European developments against the dominance of western Europe in urban historiographies.

Thus, a general absence of organs of 'political representation' and strong civic institutions in Indian towns and cities both before c. 1400 and in the course of ongoing urbanisation was perhaps the other side of the coin of multi-ethnic, agrarian empire. The state neither had to squash strong and independent city authorities nor occasioned many calls for the inclusion of local interests in extra-local governance.[234] Nevertheless, towns have variously also been connected to the everyday functioning yet also to the undoing of feudalism, and thus to the transition to modernity.[235] Naturally, therefore, it is to capitalism that we must turn our attention.

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[232] For a useful discussion, see: Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 60.

[233] See: Hasan, *Locality*.

[234] Clark, ed., *European Cities and Towns*, 201–19, for a broader canvas of changes to city governance in early modern Europe.

[235] For a sharp and concise survey: Malekandathil, 'Introduction', 1–3.

5 Capitalism

The Great Divergence is both a stylised fact and a new approach to an old problem. The fact is that there was a divergence in living standards between a cluster of economies in northwest Europe (England, most notably) and the rest of the world, by and large persisting ever since, save for convergence among European, the north American, and some non-Western economies.[1] Scratch beneath the surface of this 'fact', however, and one would not so much find any kind of resolution among historians as multiple problems. When exactly did divergence occur? How do we know it occurred? – that is, with what data as a proxy for living standards? How reliable are these data?[2]

The Great Divergence unfolded at a time before governments began national accounting (i.e., collecting data and compiling figures about the size of the economy, its growth, and each person's notional share of it). Thus, historians have had to assess each person's share of output – national income per person, nowadays measured as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita – by using a proxy, be it the purchasing power of wages or such anthropometric measures as stature. Of course, many of these proxies are themselves estimates or else come from quite scanty evidence; the degrees of separation between the evidence and what we hope it represents has only given historians more cause for debate. And, dovetailing with these disagreements over reliably identifying divergence, there is much dispute over its causes, be they environmental, intellectual, or institutional, a matter of chance or design.[3] All this has reinvigorated the field; the Great Divergence is the single most important issue in global economic history.[4]

At the heart of all this puzzling is a concern for economic development, changing living standards, and thus the related search for the origins and

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[1] See, for a well-organised guide to, and comprehensive synthesis of, the vast literature on the Great Divergence: Court, 'Reassessment'.

[2] See: Goldstone, 'Dating', and the replies in the same special issue, especially Broadberry, 'Historical National Accounting', and numerous other of Broadberry's rebuttals of the Great Divergence revisionism.

[3] Parthasarathi and Pomeranz, 'Great Divergence Debate'.

[4] See, for instance: Roy and Riello, eds. *Global Economic History*.

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sources of modern economic growth. The latter was often assumed to be inextricably linked to industrialisation (sometimes even elided with 'modernisation'); hence, the long-standing fixation on the Industrial Revolution and on England's historical experience. The so-called 'rise of the Europe', finally, was the grandest macro-narrative into which these processes were folded, although this is nowadays controversial, and rightly so, for it smacks of Eurocentrism and Orientalism in its proclamation of the superiority and triumph of the 'West' in contrast to the languishing 'Rest' (i.e., Asia, Africa, Latin America). It was against this that Kenneth Pomeranz's reciprocal comparison of parts of China (the Yangzi basin) with parts of northwest Europe (England, Holland) inaugurated the Great Divergence debate.

Pomeranz suggested that Europe was neither more dynamic nor superior to China, but lucky; that divergence opened quite late, around c. 1800; and that its causes lay in the only major differences between the two regions, which were otherwise remarkably similar. The chance discovery of coal close to manufacturing centres and water courses in England made its exploitation – and the advent of steam-powered technology – worthwhile, while the similarly fortunate discovery of the New World by Europeans provided them with 'ghost acres' (i.e., land from which to produce commodities pivotal to industrialisation like sugar and cotton without sacrificing the use of Europe's productive arable).[5] Prasannan Parthasarathi subsequently argued that India's divergence was also as late, of recent making, and as sudden as China's.[6] It arose because of Britain's need to face constraints not felt in India but resulting, in fact, from the influx of Indian imports (cotton textiles). It also arose because the British state was mercantilist and protected its national interests in a way that Indian and other states did not. Britain's conquest of India helped turn a problem into a solution, resulting in the stymying of intellectual and technological progress that might otherwise have precluded India's dramatic divergence.

Criticism of both scholars' data and analysis has been fierce, but what does any of this matter? One consequence of the late/sudden versus earlier/slower dispute is the significance it places on causes or developments in the modern versus early modern (or late medieval) periods, respectively.[7] Of course, early modernity was much more than an incubating period whose significance rests on whether or not it birthed those demographic, social, economic, political, or intellectual features necessary to foster industrialisation and thus divergence, as this book strives to show. Another consequence of the historiographical rancour has been to lose sight of some areas of common ground as well as our guiding motivations in studying the Great Divergence or seeking the origins of modern economic growth in the first place. How, we might explicitly ask and thereby reground ourselves, were peoples' lives changing – at all levels of society and across all economic classes or groups – as market relations and globalisation spread and their effects intensified? Here, then, we must bring capitalism into the picture once again.

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[5] Pomeranz, *Great Divergence*.

[6] Parthasarathi, *Asia.*

[7] Broadberry *et al*, 'Anglo-Indian Comparison'. See, also: van Zanden, *Long Road.*

Capitalism was nowhere fully formed in the early modern period – not, at least, as we might find it in Karl Marx's lifetime and thus in his writings. One approach taken by historians has been to look for precursors to that 'capitalism proper', such as agrarian capitalism, merchant capitalism, financial capitalism, and so forth.[8] Or, we might look for the features of mature capitalism, such as profit-oriented market activity, capital formation and property, competitive wage labour markets, entrepreneurship, and even a spirit of economic individualism.[9] There are severe shortcomings to both approaches – that is, to thinking of capitalism as a single spatial-temporal phenomenon, with oft-presumed origins in western Europe, and to saddling the early moderns' historical experience with the features of modernity (§11.2).[10] Instead, we might valuably turn from these Eurocentric ideas and analyses to the work of those world historians who, by the 1980s, had shaken-off the deeply ingrained notion of a 'fundamental gulf' separating places like India from Europe, the former supposedly static and unchanging, the latter the dynamic birthplace of capitalism, from whence it spread around the world following the Occidental breakout (§1.3.2).[11]

Capitalism has gradually become deracinated, one way or another, from those moorings that were formative of its historical study: out with Marxism, as well as structuralism and dependency theory (which underwrote world-systems theory), and a gradual shift away from Eurocentric projects and methodologies, paving the way toward the kinds of reciprocal comparisons made by Pomeranz and Parathasarathi. Tirthankar Roy and Giorgio Riello note, for instance, the newfound 'emphasis on market exchange on a world scale' that has popularised the idea 'that capitalism was formed of a series of interconnected market exchanges', giving rise to 'an altogether more flexible and easy definition of capitalism than the orthodox Marxist one based on patterns of ownership of assets.'[12] This chapter adopts a similar understanding of capitalism, meanwhile looking at the character of economic life in early modern India to pinpoint where and how market-based activity steadily spread.[13] This helps us better understand the character and variety of premodern capitalism(s), not to mention how India might have shaped the emerging global capitalist system. The latter was becoming manifest in the eighteenth century; was largely organised by the interests, laws, and violent hegemony emanating from Europe; and is now that form of capitalism most familiar to us thanks to the writings of Marx and others in his stead.

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[8] Neal, 'Introduction', here 2.

[9] Such is Muldrew's approach in 'Capitalism'.

[10] Edwards *et al*, 'Capitalism in Global History', for a critical survey of seminal works since the 1950s and the contours of a new scholarly agenda. See, also: Burnard and Riello, 'Slavery', for a critique of the so-called 'new history of capitalism', the pivot of which has been slavery and the slave trade.

[11] Perlin, 'Proto-Industrialisation'. Subrahmanyam, 'Rural Industry', especially 110–14, for critical examination of the debate ushered by Perlin's contribution.

[12] Roy and Riello, 'Introduction', 5.

[13] *C.f.* Roy, 'Capitalism in India'.

One concern may be that disowning more left-wing approaches entails abandoning inquiry concerning the entanglement of capitalism with power, violence, exploitation, and structural inequality.[14] Against this, the following survey explores and foregrounds such entanglements wherever possible, sometimes bringing to light issues to which older Marxist – or world systems-inspired analysis was often blind (e.g., gender, the environment). By the end of this chapter, three things ought to be clear. First, that many of the processes of economic change at work in India through the early modern period had causes or outcomes interlinking the Indian subcontinent to other parts of the world. Second, and as a corollary, that the historical development of the global capitalist system was as intimately connected to the early modern 'Indian Ocean world-economy' as it was to the Atlantic world-economy, even as it came to subsume these, in course.[15] And, third, that to be genuinely concerned with living standards and material well-being, we cannot ignore the perils of focusing narrowly on economic growth (and divergence). The centuries-long processes of economic expansion and the very extraction of the earth's resources that has fed us and our improving 'quality of life' will soon reach such an extent as to potentially make our living standards freefall. With this in mind, the next section opens by thinking about the environment and the origins of the Anthropocene.

5.1 Land

We live in the Anthropocene, 'a new geological epoch' in our planet's history in which humans have become 'geological agents', their lifeways and impacts on Earth so large and significant that it has 'altered Earth systems' (e.g., climate, environment).[16] Whether it began during the Great Acceleration from the 1950s or the Industrial Revolution of the long nineteenth century, it remains that the spread and deepening of capitalism is absolutely central to why and how humans became geological agents. Of course, the deeper into the past we go, the greater the difficulty of convincingly linking human phenomena to planetary-level change. Yet, there is good reason to examine the impact upon the natural world of early modern globalisation and empire building, for they were deeply entwined with the development of capitalism, industrialisation, and the Great Divergence. The European 'discovery' of the Americas brought Old World diseases to the New World that resulted in the 'Great Dying', a phenomenon of human death at such scale that it perhaps resulted in reforestation (this proposition is contentious). This possibly created a carbon sink that helped precipitate global cooling. Thus, it is possible to link the Occidental breakout and the Little Ice Age (§1.2.1), and the dawn of early modernity to the transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene.[17] But there are other ways of making such connections.

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[14] Edwards *et al*, 'Capitalism in Global History'. Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, argues that early modern south India was a commercial society without being capitalist, and thus offers a critical counterpoint to some of the arguments made in this chapter and the understandings of capitalism underlying them.

[15] *C.f.* Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, especially 213–23 for a subtly but decisively different interpretation, resting on a belief that the Indian Ocean world-economy was not capitalist and that only a single form of capitalism truly existed (i.e., that found in Europe).

[16] Bashford, 'Anthropocene', 341.

5.1.1 An Unending Frontier?

In his magisterial synthesis of environmental history, John F. Richards identified and examined four key anthropogenic processes: (1) 'intensified human land use along settlement frontiers,' (2) 'biological invasions,' (3) 'intensified commercial hunting', and (4) 'energy and resource scarcities in core areas'.[18] It was from c. 1500, according to Richards, that these four processes intensified. A key factor was the steady increase in the capacity and efficiency of states and markets (as described in Chapters 5 and 6 of this book); ever-stronger, they 'encouraged voracious consumption of new, varied natural resources from even the most sparsely populated, seemingly marginal areas of the globe.'[19] Each of the four processes is important, yet what concerns us here – and was perhaps the commonest and most wide-reaching – is the greater pressure placed on the land through the expansion of settled cultivation 'at the expense of forests, woodlands, wetlands, and savannas', inevitably causing habitat loss, a reduction in both biomass and biodiversity, and myriad other changes, such as the dropping of the water table around irrigated lands or increased flooding where waterways were modified.[20]

'Encouraged, directed, and subsidised by expansive states, surplus populations moved steadily and easily to new areas promising employment or fertile land', usually on the frontiers of states, where settlement and arable met shifting cultivators, pastoralists, and hunter-gatherers roaming forests or open grasslands, and which often resulted in 'ethnic' conflict, in consequence.[21] Viewing these areas as 'empty' lands, 'the colonising state conferred property rights on its frontier settlers' – namely, 'the right to occupy, alienate, mortgage, and bequeath lands so owned' – requiring only that they continue to work or even 'improve' (i.e., increase the yields of) their new property, all of which was bolstered by cadastral surveys and mapping that 'added new precision to notions of land ownership and aided nascent land markets.'[22] Occasionally, this process had an industrial character, such as where vast tracts of rainforest were cleared by enslaved peoples to create sugar plantations.

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[17] Graeber and Wengrow, *Dawn*, 258. See, also: Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 58–85.

[18] Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 4.

[19] Ibid, 24.

[20] Ibid, 4.

[21] Ibid, 4.

[22] Ibid, 5.

Across the Indian subcontinent, there was a secular increase in cultivation through the early modern period, albeit in fits and starts. Aside from the seventeenth-century phase of the Little Ice Age, other – occasionally localised – phenomena sometimes set a pause on growth. The demographic toll of famine induced by climatic fluctuation, combined with the 'state's chronic inability to harmonise the agrarian economy of the dry, upland plateau with the commercialised economy of the rich Tamil coast before the sixteenth century', resulted in the cessation – possibly the stagnation – of growth in later fifteenth-century Vijayanagara, for instance.[23] If India was prone to dramatic and devastating climatic fluctuation on occasion, large parts of the subcontinent were blessed with an ecology that provided great scope for the expansion of production, especially the lands straddling the valleys and basins of its great river systems. The northeast monsoon (December-February) brought a cool-dry season before the hot-dry season (March-June), followed by the hot-wet season associated with the southwest monsoon (from July). This is the general pattern, for the timing and intensity of the monsoon varied: Punjab and the Deccan Plateau are never inundated quite like Bengal or the western Ghats, for instance, and are far less humid.

The crop cycle followed the seasons, with winter crops planted just as the earlier crop had been harvested to benefit from the rains and avoid the hot swelter.[24] Europeans were stunned by the harvesting of two crops a year, even three in a few places. Indian agriculturalists had a sound understanding of crop rotation, usually leaving most land single cropped (*yek-fasla*) with either the spring (*rabi*) or autumn (*kharif*) harvest crop, so that the land was fallow for half the year, but sometimes sowing the land for a succession of harvests. In addition, evidence of land being sown with a succession of rice, tobacco, and then cotton in eighteenth-century Bengal, for instance, suggests a wider knowledge of crop rotation.[25] Irrigation – outside the rainy season – was by means of wells and canals.[26]

Climate played a key role in the phasing of agrarian expansion, and the experience on the Indian subcontinent was most likely part of longer-term patterns seen across the northern hemisphere: disturbance in the seventeenth century sandwiched by more propitious periods up to c. 1560 or 1570 and after about the second quarter of the eighteenth century. As to the particular dynamic of agrarian expansion, this was primarily motored by the steady pushing back of the cultivable frontier. The clearance of scrub and jungle and its conversion to arable had been ongoing for centuries and had advanced to such a great extent in the Gangetic valley in the pre-Mughal period that travellers noted the want of trees, yet the process would continue through the auspices of the Mughals and their successors, such as the Afghan rulers of eighteenth-century Rohilkhand and Farrukabad.[27] According to Irfan Habib, the greatest increases in the period from the advent of Mughal rule to c. 1900 were experienced in the Gangetic valley and Bengal, resulting from the clearance of sub-montane forests (§3.1.1), and in Berar, due to the denudation of the central Indian forests.[28] Because of negligible technological change and thus the continued reliance on manuring as the sole means of maintaining fertility and yields, the thin soils of the erstwhile forests and wastes degraded, so that output per acre dropped in the long term.[29] Some might rail at Mughal-era clearance and colonisation (by the plough) of Bengal's forests being posited as the beginnings of a process that has now reached its frontier, on the Sundarbans, a delicate and globally significant environment that is currently under destruction.[30] Yet, we cannot situate early modern south Asia in a world of expanding commercialisation and ignore the planetary-level effects of such processes.

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[23] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 85.

[24] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 8–15, gives an excellent guide to India's diverse ecology and seasonality.

[25] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 27, where the variations in the practice are noted, including evidence that it was little understood in some parts of India.

[26] Ibid, 28–39.

Globalisation also played its part, for it was not only *how much* but also *what* was produced that changed. Whether primarily for subsistence or for market exchange, Indian peasants grew a range of legumes and food grains (*jins-i ghalla*) – rice, wheat, barley, millet, and sorghum. With the steady commercialisation of the economy, production for the market of a range of higher-grade or cash crops (*jins-i kamil* or *jins-i a'la*) increased: oilseed, cotton, sugarcane, indigo and other dye-yielding plants, hemp and other fibre-yielding plants, spices, saffron (in Kashmir), and fruit (which was for market exchange if not quite a cash-crop *per se*).[31] The process of commercialisation did not begin with the arrival of Europeans in the Indian Ocean world in 1498 or with the establishment of the Mughal state in 1526.[32] In north India, peasants seem to have been paying the revenue demands of the state in cash from the thirteenth century.[33] In the south, too, there is evidence of the steady monetisation of the economy from c. 1500 linked to tighter relation of the 'state, producing economy, and external commerce', especially as the latter steadily expanded.[34]

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[27] Moosvi, *People*, 91–100; Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 52; Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 104–43.

[28] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 21–22.

[29] Ibid, 22–23. Habib also suggests that the average size of the field and number of cattle per household fell between c. 1595 and c. 1900, so that the availability of manure probably declined: *op. cit.*, 62.

[30] Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 32–38.

[31] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 43–59, which provides this largely north Indian picture. For a survey of south Indian crops and agrarian specialisation, see: Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 25–31.

[32] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 57, 93–96, for evidence of commercialisation in the later medieval era.

[33] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 276.

[34] Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*. See, also: Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 124–27; Sohoni, 'Coinage'.

Yet, the spread of the cash nexus becomes much more visible – in the source material, at least – from the late sixteenth century.[35] The causes were interactive and both local and global. They include the spread of the Mughal imperium and its fiscal and monetary systems, part and parcel of which were efforts to standardise weights and coins, collect revenue demands in cash, and encourage greater cultivation; the influx of bullion and/or coined metal and the increasing monetisation of the economy; and the growth of trade at various scales (local, regional, overland, overseas), especially Indian Ocean and Euro-Asian trade.[36] Precious metal flows from Europe (via the Levant), Japan, and east Africa pre-dated the discovery of the New World, yet American silver imports were transformative.[37] Shipments from Europe via the Cape of Good Hope increased almost twenty-fold over the sixteenth century due to the availability of American silver.[38] But this was actually the least important route until the eighteenth century, for the route from Europe via the Levant as well as direct shipment from America via Manilla were the main channels by which Europeans brought precious metals to Asia, particularly India and China.[39]

Besides this, the spread of the cash nexus was global in another respect. The use of copper coin for everyday transactions was growing in Europe at roughly the same time as India, Burma, southeast Asia, and Japan, signalling that economic change in India was part of a broader development.[40] Indian agriculturalists carted their produce to local markets for sale in return for goods and cash, using the latter to buy other goods or to pay taxes, which was expressed in terms of copper coins called *dams*. Or they might part with a proportion in lieu of taxes to the local *jagirdar* and his agents (who were probably able to realise a better price than the peasant themselves) and in lieu of loans to their creditors (to whom they sold on contracted, and probably unfavourable, terms). Some merchants also visited villages to buy certain higher-value crops, then selling them through their networks.[41]

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[35] Muldrew, *Obligations*, 100–01 reminds us that monetisation and money usage were nowhere sufficient in early modern England to 'alienate economic exchanges from social exchanges in the Marxist sense of a "cash nexus"' and money was really 'only the grease which oiled the much larger machinery of credit.' In India, too, rapid monetisation propelled the economy toward the destination implied by the concept of the 'cash nexus', without actually quite reaching it.

[36] Richards, ed., *Imperial Monetary System*, remains a most valuable collection of essays on monetary history and much of what is described, above. That said, besides metallic money, cowries and other 'humble currency' remained in use into the colonial period, especially in Bengal; Perlin's essay in *op. cit.* and his 'Proto-Industrialisation, 63–64. Habib, *Agrarian System*, 293–97, describes the state's means of incentivising or inducing cultivation. And, for the existence of a cash-nexus in the Maratha domains: Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 331–39.

[37] Irigoin, 'Global Silver Economy' is an excellent essay, explaining how the exploitation of American silver impacted Europe and Asia.

[38] Japanese silver remained critical, not far off the volume of American metal imports, which gives some sense of the impact the injection of the latter made to Asian trade: Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese Empire*, 159. Access to Japanese silver, moreover, underwrote the Portuguese expansion and – following their expulsion from Japan in favour of the Dutch – the VOC's domination of other European players to about 1680: *op. cit.*, 186–87, 293.

[39] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 186–87.

[40] Perlin, 'Proto-Industrialisation', 62–63, 68–69.

Another important cause of the growth of commercialised agriculture was the agility and adaptability of Indian peasants, without whose knowledge and willingness to introduce or switch between crops all of this would have been impossible. One peasant in late eighteenth-century eastern Rajasthan was said to raise an extraordinary nine crops, but many others in the same locality impressively raised between three and six each, for example.[42] Some of these crops were possibly higher-yield varieties, the products of long-term specialisation, or else more abundant due to the use of fertilisers (e.g., green manure, animal manure), as was the case elsewhere in Asia.[43] Some were entirely new, quite literally the fruits of what Alfred W. Crosby termed the Columbian Exchange – that is, the criss-cross of Old and New World species.[44] They made their appearance from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, either via the Ottoman lands or via Portuguese settlements, and were eventually embraced by Indians, much as east and southeast Asians did, too.[45] Maize was cultivated in western and south India from the 1620s or so and had spread to eastern Rajasthan by the 1660s. Tobacco probably spread first to southern courts like Bijapur and then to the north. The now-ubiquitous chilli peppers that spice Indian cuisine were another New World novelty, as were guavas, pineapples, papayas, and cashew nuts, while coffee – although cultivated only to a limited extent, entirely in south India – originated from the other side of the Arabian Sea.[46]

The consequences of this have not been drawn out beyond trite celebration of Indians' gustatory cosmopolitanism.[47] The clearance of forest, furthermore, did not merely continue in a piecemeal way, but accelerated under Shah Jahan and even became fairly systematised, almost a dictate of Mughal rule.[48] Similar processes unfolded across the world, from the expanding Russian Empire in the northern hemisphere to the Dutch settlement at the Cape of Good Hope and its environs in the south, but the evidence from China is powerfully suggestive of the combined impact of cash crop production *and* the extension of cultivation to increasingly marginal land.[49] There, not only tobacco but also maize and sweet potatoes were incorporated into the consumption and cultivation patterns of a hungry yet growing population, for these crops were high in calories and well suited to relatively poor soils on slopes and hillsides. In the medium-term, the cultivation of marginal land more suited to the shifting swidden agriculture of indigenes led to the rapid degradation and washing away of the soil, the silting of waterways, and thus the devastating flooding and famines of the late Qing era, although such dangers and the general loss of biodiversity were apparent to the Qing elites long before then.[50]

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[41] Ibid, 73–79; Habib, *Agrarian System*, 85, 276–81.

[42] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 43.

[43] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii, 427, 449, on Japan.

[44] Graeber and Wengrow, *Dawn*, 256, for a summary.

[45] On the latter, see, for example: Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 436–37.

[46] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 42–43, 50–51, 54–55. See, for the longer history of transplantation of flora, prior to the Europeans' arrival: Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 168.

[47] Except cursorily in: Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 32–38.

[48] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 29–30.

[49] Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 242–306. The relation of agrarian expansion to soil erosion or desiccation in the long term in southeast Asia have also been detailed by Lieberman in *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, e.g., 239, as part of the explanation of political cycles (§7.5).

Adding to the impacts of cash crop farming were those associated with shipbuilding. Indian shipwrights were celebrated by contemporaries for their craftsmanship, even supplying Europeans with vessels, but their flourishing business is an index for the more archivally silent and invisible process of deforestation.[51] In order to begin to place this into context, we might remember that the largest European ships were constructed from the timber not of hundreds, but of *thousands* of felled mature trees. The rapid escalation of shipbuilding so depleted English woodlands of species like oak by the seventeenth century, that a lucrative market for timber from private lands sprang up to supply the Royal Navy, who also found it necessary to import timber from the Baltic and the American colonies.[52] Indian shipbuilding probably produced similar effects.

As the demand for certain goods grew, so 'commodity frontiers' pushed outward, sucking in more labour and turning more land over to settled agriculture, transforming the 'global countryside' and drawing the livelihoods of more and more Indians – like their counterparts elsewhere in the world – within the ambit of the market, so that (parts of) India became steadily more entangled into the global capitalist system that was emerging from c. 1450.[53] A few caveats, however. First, there were places where trade was just as important, yet was of a distinct character from what has presently been described. Malabar, for example, had never been a part of the Mughal Empire or other inland states and its rulers did not collect land revenues until the end of our period. Calicut was its most important port, although Cochin enjoyed efflorescences in the sixteenth century (associated with the Portuguese) and in the early eighteenth century (the Dutch). The main exports were pepper, and latterly timber, sandalwood, and coconut products, with the export trade dominated by various Indian and Arab merchants, European private traders, the remaining (small) proportion handled by the European companies.[54]

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[50] Janku, 'Drought'; Schlesinger, *World Trimmed With Fur*. For comparison with the combination of demographic growth, imperial expansion, and ecological damage in the Ottoman classical age: White, *Climate of Rebellion*, 15–122. Among the outcomes of the resultant crisis was further commercialisation based on cash crops for European markets; *op. cit.*, 276–97.

[51] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 185.

[52] Richards, *Unending Frontier*, 224–27. For other, devastating details: Paquette, *Seaborne Empires*, 129–30.

[53] For an explication of this thesis and a novel research agenda linking capitalism and commodities: Beckert *et al*, 'Commodity Frontiers'.

[54] Das Gupta, *Collected Essays*, 158–60.

Secondly, despite the march of settled agriculture, Indian peasants (and artisans) were able to take flight in the face of adverse conditions, often seeking refuge with distant relatives or – as *uparis* (landless labourers) – maybe even welcomed into villages in need of extra hands.[55] The commonest cause was the search for sustenance. In the Mughal classical age alone, there seem to have been scarcities or famines of varying degrees of severity in 1554–56 (afflicting Delhi, Agra, and other large tracts of the Gangetic valley), the 1560s (Gujarat), 1572–73 (Sirhind), 1574–75 (Gujarat), 1578–79 (parts of north India), 1587–88 and 1589–90 (Sindh), 1596 (across Hindustan), 1597 (Kashmir), the great famine of 1630–32 (Gujarat and the Deccan), 1636–37 (Punjab), recurrently in the 1640s and in 1650 (across north India), 1651 (Punjab), 1655 (parts of the Deccan), 1662–63 (Bengal), during the war of succession fought after Shah Jahan's death, in 1670 (Bihar and Bijapur), 1678 (around Lahore and Ajmer), 1685 and 1691 (Gujarat), 1686 (the Deccan), 1694–95 (Gujarat and Delhi), 1695 (Odisha), 1696–97 (parts of Gujarat and Malwa), a great famine in 1702–04 (the Deccan), two at the start of Farrukhsiyar's reign (1713–19) and another in Delhi in 1719. The causes were droughts or unseasonable rains, occasionally plagues of locusts or bouts of plague, and sometimes the effect of warfare.[56]

There were, finally, a range of groups who maintained semi-nomadic or pastoral lifestyles. The Banjaras combined the search for fresh pasturage with the carriage of bulky goods, like grain, on the back of their herds of thousands of pack bullocks. They had been operating in the Deccan since at least the fifteenth century, with south Indian weavers relying on them to bring cotton from the 'black soil' tracts, but they also moved other goods through their very extensive networks across the peninsula.[57] The cost of transportation was low, but profits were only to be made when price differentials were sufficiently large, perhaps due to scarcity caused by poor harvests or the disruption brought by localised fighting or war.[58] Other pastoral groups include the Powindas, who circulated between the Afghan highlands and the north Indian plains, and sometimes as far south as Gujarat and the Deccan, exchanging their animal products (hides, milk, fats like *ghi*) and the productions of their homeland (especially fresh and dried fruits and nuts) for Indian wares.[59] Outside settled agriculture and pastoralism were groups residing in forests and uplands (§1.1.1).

5.1.2 Ownership and Rights

If some mobile groups grazed thousands of animals on (presumably) common pasturage while other seemingly settled cultivators did not hesitate to take flight when necessary, we might ask: Who owned the land? Was it the king? While much contemporary and colonial-era writing by Europeans contains the hardy Orientalist trope of the absolutist potentate, Indian – especially Mughal – sources paint a different picture. There was neither sanction in Hindu or Muslim law for the king's allodial title to land, nor any proclamation of such pretence in Mughal documents. The revenue demanded by the Ottoman or Mughal rulers from their subjects was conceived as a kind of social contract, for Hanafi jurisprudential thought had it that the land belonged to god, with the king merely its guardian.[60] That said, transfers of urban real estate (§4.2.3) signify ownership and property right residing beyond the frame of mere royal dispensation (i.e., the grant of *waqf*, *madad-i ma'ash*, *inam*), no matter that such property rights were more fragile in India and many other parts of the early modern world than today.[61] In south India, too, property rights were extant by the Vijayanagara period, held primarily by temples but also by individuals, as attested by the sales of land to pay property taxes.[62]

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[55] Gordon, *Marathas*, 36.

[56] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 113–22, for details of the pre-1707 famines, and 291–92, for famine relief measures; Alam, *Crisis*, 31–32.

[57] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 128–29.

[58] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 69–70.

[59] Lally, *Silk Roads*, 29–31.

In mainland southeast Asia, by way of a comparison, glebe lands (the equivalent of *madad-i ma'ash*) were 'openly sold and mortgaged like private property' from the early fifteenth century. Royal bans on such alienation and sale from time to time notwithstanding, the real estate market steadily developed, supported by the legal system and driven by the demand for foodstuffs that pushed up the value of land around marketing centres around the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.[63] Here we find all the same ingredients in the mix in south Asia, too: the pressure of commercialisation on land values, the appetite for speculation in real estate, a developing legal infrastructure, and the unwillingness (or inability) of the early modern state to thwart the sale of property.[64] Increasingly, and certainly by the last century or so of our period, therefore, the market for land existed as never before. The evidence from Ottoman Anatolia is similar.[65]

If, before that time, the king did not own the land, then how about the Indian equivalent of a baron? The words *zamindari* and zamindar are of entirely Indo-Persian derivation and had come into use by the early fourteenth century. *Zamindari* indicates proprietary rights that provided the possessor with an income, usually a customary share of village produce. Zamindars possessed such rights and 'belonged to a rural class other than, and standing above, the peasantry.'[66] Theirs, moreover, was a superior right: zamindars owned land and so, in many cases, did peasants, yet the zamindar in some places possessed the right to evict landowning peasants or to redistribute land beyond that of his (or her) ownership.[67] The wellspring of such rights was 'when a village was settled by a person who had its virgin land brought under a client peasantry' or when peasants were bought out of their rights by one of a superior non-peasant status.[68] Such actions were predicated, however, on a king's recognition of such a class of actors, often by virtue of a king seeing a particular caste prevail over the peasantry in the localities of a particular area. South Indian records pertaining to property transfers in the Vijayanagara period refer, it is worth noting, to a similar understanding of a landlord's right to a 'superior share' (*melvaram*) against the cultivators' 'lower share' (*kilvaram*).[69] These were imbricated, in turn, within the (stacked) revenue claims of high officials (*nayakars*), then the regional grandees, and finally the imperial centre, much as in the Mughal north.[70]

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[60] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 123–25.

[61] Khoury, 'Administrative Practice', 309–10.

[62] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 50–51.

[63] Lieberman in *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 160, 179, 298.

[64] In addition to evidence – mostly from north India – cited in this chapter, see: Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 106, for indications that the Tamil country was part of these processes.

[65] Faroqhi, *Towns*, 242–66; Khoury, 'Administrative Practices'.

[66] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 174, for citation, and 169–91.

Sale of *zamindaris* to outsiders was one route to entry into that class, exploited by warlords, low-ranking officeholders and servicemen, and rural moneylenders, who made their purchases either in cash, with mortgages, or through loans to other zamindars that could be repaid through the transfer of the *zamindari* upon debt default. Of this last, there are relatively few examples, perhaps because success as a zamindar required coercive force to bolster one's superior rights.[71] Other claims to *zamindari* came from tributary chiefs who not only held superior rights vis-à-vis peasants, commanded a customary share of produce, and possessed the necessary military force, but had achieved this independently of any overarching kingly authority, putting them almost on a par with India's rajas.

Indeed, some rajas sold their rights to a village 'much like any other zamindar', while some village officials (*chaudhuris*, or *deshmukhs* in south India – often zamindars themselves) could grow into a chief, or vice versa.[72] Interestingly, the power of *deshmukh* families grew in tandem with the Deccan sultanates and their successor, the Maratha state. By settling local disputes, collecting revenues and submitting a portion to the central treasury, and providing military manpower, these lineages had their landed rights confirmed by a *sanad* or writ from the king, giving them greater clout if their subordinates rebelled, in turn. It was in this context that many of the leading Maratha clans rose to prominence (e.g., the Shindes, Manes, Ghatges, Nimbalkars, and Mohites).[73] Returning to the Mughal north, the differences in status of rajas from ordinary zamindars enabled them to enjoy a greater degree of autonomy from the centre in return for their military service and payment of tribute. Some of the leading Rajput chiefs, for example, chose to enter imperial service and receive ranks (*mansabs*) and prebendal rights (*jagirs*) in addition to their *watan* – their homeland, which was reconstituted as a non-transferable and hereditary *jagir* – in return for military service, tributary payments (*peshkash*), and some other revenue payments.[74] Some even replicated a *jagirdari* system within their ancestral or *watan* domains, as the rulers of Mewar and Marwar did (§7.1.2).[75]

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[67] Ibid, 177–78. See, also: Koch, 'Property Rights', 200.

[68] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 197.

[69] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 51.

[70] Ibid, 57. See, for a comprehensive survey of revenue relations in the various states and zones (coastal, inland) of south India: Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 31–44.

[71] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 201–02.

[72] Ibid, 222–24.

[73] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 187–88; Gordon, *Marathas*, 23–35. For a detailed discussion of rights and revenue relations in the Maratha state, see: Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 251–92.

Overall, it was the zamindars' superior rights (and coercive power, in some cases) that meant they were called upon by higher authorities for the collection of land revenues. In this respect, 'zamindar' designated a tax gatherer (rather than a taxpayer), frequently turning them into intermediaries between the state and the revenue payees (peasants, for the most part), so that their rights gradually came to be described in Mughal documents as a form of service (*khidmat*).[76] Such lexical manoeuvring was part of the Mughal centre's consolidation of power, involving the pacification and incorporation of these powerholders into the imperial framework as mere tax gatherers – whereupon they could be rewarded for excellent service and punished for disloyalty with dispossession of their *zamindari* – rather than leaving them as autonomous agents possessed with the means of opposing the emperor's authority.[77] Some of the more truculent zamindars who possessed sufficient coercive force, in fact, resisted Mughal authority (§6.1.3). A similar reorganisation of local landed power into the administrative structure – where such lordship was not displaced altogether – began a little earlier in the Vijayanagara Empire and was strengthening around the mid-fifteenth century as the imperial centre firmed its demand of revenues in cash, itself supported by steady monetisation.[78]

What about the peasants (*raiyats*) themselves?[79] While the zamindars held a superior right – that is, one extending beyond their own landholding and entailing something larger than mere ownership to include, for instance, customary dues – this did not preclude peasants' possessing proprietary rights or else holding mere usufructuary rights. Mughal documents discern peasant land (*raiyati*) without any superior right, although this was shrinking due to encroachment by zamindars; distinguish peasant holdings (*raiyat kastha* or *zamin-i riaya*); and note peasants' ability to turn their rights to land into a saleable proprietary right. More often, however, it is the right to settlement and tenancy that is recognised. Mughal documents also recognise the zamindars' rights to redistribute land and the emperor's right to redistribute land on the occasion of peasant cultivators' flight, the ultimate aim of which was to ensure land remained under the plough.[80] The preference being for peasants to remain on the land, orders were periodically issued to the *jagirdars* urging them to return anyone who had migrated to their place of origin. This recognition of peasant's right of occupancy or ownership and the anxiety about peasant flight was, Irfan Habib surmises, 'natural in an age when land was relatively abundant and peasants scarce' and had the effect of making most peasants into semi-serfs rather than totally free agents.[81]

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[74] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 224–25.

[75] Ibid, 226; Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 79–80.

[76] A *ta'alluqdar* who was also a zamindar might, therefore, be remitting the revenue of an area of land much larger than his or her own *zamindari*; see: Habib, *Agrarian System*, 209–14.

[77] Ibid, 220–22. See, also: Alam, 'Eastern India', on how *khidmat* was transforming by the later seventeenth century and how the new arrangements fuelled the contests between the centre and the *zamindars* in the eighteenth century.

[78] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 144.

[79] In addition to what is described here, a useful complement can be found in: Raychaudhuri, 'Agrarian System', 262–66.

Over the eighteenth century, there was a steady subinfeudation of these landed rights, with significant consequences for the fate of the Mughal Empire (§7.4). But what of the significance of this system for economic growth and the development of capitalism? In a widely influential essay published in 1969, Irfan Habib argues that there was no potential for capitalist development.[82] This was despite the spread of market relations and the use of money, the evidence of 'Smithian growth' (i.e., growth achieved by using more labour or bringing more land into productive use), and the growth of *zamindari* – and, with it, of *khud-kasht* farming based on hired labour – all of which might have been the preconditions for primary accumulation and the emergence of capitalist farming. Holding that the vast bulk of agrarian surplus went to the emperor, nobility, and higher-ranking servicemen, whose major expenditure was either on war or conspicuous consumption, Habib contends that there was no basis for the development of capitalism, even if we see the growth of urban-centred manufacturing and (foreign) trade in this period.

Being an orthodox Marxist, one consequent chink in Habib's argument is to identify 'capitalism' with the kind described in Marxist theory, denying the possibility of a distinctly early modern and/or south Asian variant while flying dangerously close to Marx's ideas about 'Oriental despotism' (described below).[83] As for his pessimism about the state's parasitism, this has been challenged by scholars who have shown that the imperial state was less smooth-functioning and hegemonic than previously supposed (§7.3), on one side of the coin, as well as work suggesting a little more scope for rural consumption in early modern India than Habib and his followers have granted (§4.1.2), on the other. As we shall see in this chapter, furthermore, merchants played a significant and steadily growing role in the economy of early modern India, while the relationship of trade and taxes to warfare was hardly as inconsequential – in terms of capitalist development – as Habib's work suggests, even as mercantile activity, state power, and the production of violence were entangled in different configurations and with different effects in eighteenth-century India compared to, say, Britain.

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[80] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 127–30.

[81] Ibid, 133, for citation, and 130–34, for analysis of documentary evidence.

[82] Habib, 'Capitalistic Development'.

[83] On this last point, see: Athar Ali, 'Critique', 701–03.

5.2 Labour

Marx himself wrote extensively about India, which held a special place in the development of his theory of capital. Marx viewed the means and relations of production in pre-colonial India to be sufficiently distinct to those in other times and places to merit a separate category: the Asiatic mode of production. Its key feature was Oriental despotism: the state was viewed as a behemoth that exercised its absolute power over a largely undifferentiated rural mass by appropriating all surplus.[84] There was no commodified or market-oriented production, no private property, no civil society, and no political consciousness in consequence. As the Ottoman historian, Huri İslamoğlu-İnan notes, the Asiatic mode of production was not only more grist to the mill of nineteenth-century Orientalist thinking, shaping how Western and colonial histories about the Islamicate world were written. It also cast a very long shadow over non-European societies and economies well into the twentieth century by rendering them ahistorical, static, and incapable of change – and thus unworthy of study.[85] Indian historians like Irfan Habib may not utilise the theory, and they may highlight those respects in which the theory is empirically wrong and where dynamism was to be found (e.g., in the spread of market relations), but Marx's belief in Oriental despotism is indelibly imprinted upon such analyses nonetheless. Putting such ideas and assumptions to one side, we may now proceed to bring into view an alternative and better picture of the economy of pre-colonial India to write a different history of capitalism.

5.2.1 'Free' Labour and its Markets

The history of labour in precolonial India, Shireen Moosvi notes, is underdeveloped compared to other parts of Asia, let alone Europe. That said, some of the broad features of rural and urban labour can be sketched, even if comparison with the experience and values of labour elsewhere is impeded by the state of the historiography.[86] The peasantry was in no way a monolithic or undifferentiated mass, despite very limited social mobility and the social and proprietary relations sketched above. One set of distinctions can be made between the poorest peasants, above whom were the mass of peasants (*reza riaya* in the Mughal world), over whom the big men or headmen (*muqaddams*) exercised their sway.[87] A second set of distinctions can be made between landless, ordinary, and 'rich peasants', the last cultivating large areas with their own ploughs and sometimes making use of hired labour. These labourers were paid in cash wages or in kind on a daily or seasonal basis; there is no documentation of sharecropping arrangements.[88] A third distinction revolves around peasants' relationship to the market: at one end were subsistence producers, at the other were those whose output was entirely commodified, with most somewhere in between, for the trend was certainly toward production for the market over the early modern period.

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[84] See, for instance, Habib, 'Marx's Perception', especially xx-xxv, and the rest of the volume in which this survey appears.

[85] İslamoğlu-İnan, ed., *Ottoman Empire*, 1–6.

[86] Moosvi, 'Labour', where the state of the evidentiary record is attributed as the cause.

[87] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 135–44.

The mobility of labour did not only take the form of flight in the face of hardship; 'a region's circulatory tradition could,' Dirk H.A. Kolff remarks, 'produce little diasporas.'[89] Take, for example, *barahmasas* (songs of twelve months) as a genre of Indian folk song. These expressed a woman's loneliness as her husband laboured far from home, thus testifying to a world where mobility was culturally understood and accepted.[90] A word also about women's labour, which some materials suggest was indistinguishable from male labour in terms of pay and responsibilities, others indicating that women partook in particular, gender-defined tasks: not ploughing, but weeding, transplanting, and harvesting, not brick laying, but brick carrying, not weaving, but thread production. Additionally, women performed many non-marketised labour tasks: processing the harvest as part of the rural manufacturing economy (e.g., cleaning and winding cotton, working the sugarcane and oilseed presses, etc), animal husbandry, and innumerable invisible jobs, such as the preparation and carrying of food to the fields.[91] Besides rural labour, men also participated in the market for military labour that opened in the slack season (§6.1), while others serviced the demand for military and naval power – as well as skilled carpenters and ship builders – created by European operations in Asia, which was impossible to meet using either free Europeans, convicts, or enslaved non-Europeans and was probably based on wage labour.[92] In such respects and probably more broadly, too, labour was as mobile in the search for employment in south Asia as it was in the Ottoman realm, of which we have a fabulously rich picture.[93]

Turning to the craft or manufacturing sector proper, one can again distinguish fully commodified from partially or non-commodified production, as well as high-skilled versus low-skilled tasks (e.g., weaving versus thread production). That said, nowhere in India do artisans seem to have been divided into guilds as they were in Europe, in west Asia, where the Arabic term *sinf* indicates a form of such organisation, or in east Asia.[94] Some artisans 'maintained control over their product until it was sold in the market', ranging from those 'relatively well-to-do artisans who owned their equipment and produced luxury goods for a limited market as well as poorer artisans who produced ordinary goods for the larger market.'[95] Others worked in workshops (*karkhanas*) using materials and tools provided by their 'employers' – who might be the emperor, princes and nobles, rich merchants, or even master artisans – either in return for wages or receiving advances for the purchase of material from a merchant/buyer to whom the finished goods were sold at pre-agreed prices.[96] Dutch East India Company sources pertaining to Gujarat reveal that wage labour had spread to other trades in the urban economy, including the work of carpenters and bricklayers. Urbanisation in early modern Japan led to a construction boom that created tremendous demand for bricklayers and other craftsmen, in turn fuelling a consumer boom, so we might postulate similar effects in Mughal India.[97] All this puts paid to Habib's seminal objections to the notion that merchants/capital had subordinated artisans/production by the eve of colonialism. At the very least, we ought to recognise that market relations had made many inroads within Indian society.[98]

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[88] Moosvi, 'Labour', 247.

[89] Kolff, 'Market', 23.

[90] Alam, 'Persian in Precolonial Hindustan', 144–47. Note: Nanak composed in this genre, which found its way into Sikh scripture; Singh, *First Sikh*, 10–11.

[91] Moosvi, *People*, 135–58.

[92] See, indicatively: van Rossum, 'Running'.

[93] See: Faroqhi, *Travel*.

Just as peasants could take flight, so might artisans, either pushed by hardship or pulled by higher wages.[99] Yet, none were more mobile than seafarers, and India's central place in the maritime economy of the Indian Ocean world meant its ports functioned as lively markets for seaborne labour. Asian seafarers were known as 'lascars' and were vital to shipping, whether on small boats or larger ocean-going vessels, including those plying trans-oceanic routes. Although some were procured as slaves and trained in the job, the bulk came from one of two pools. First, there were those possessing specialist skills, often because they hailed from families long connected to the sea; this was most true of *serangs* or chiefs of sailors, as well as their assistants. Second, was the larger category of those forced into wage labour aboard ship by poverty or indebtedness, often recruited from the countryside by specialist labour contractors.

In respect of both their origins and recruitment, as well as their work in far-flung locales, Indian maritime labour shared much in common with that in the contemporary north Atlantic world and was probably just as global. The Dutch, for instance, recruited sailors in Surat and in Bengal to work at their ports (e.g., Batavia, Cape Town) or aboard ships on voyages (both within the Indian Ocean world and between Asia and Europe), thus competing with the English, other European organisations, and, of course, Asian shipowners. European demand was constant but waxed when war and conscription at home dried up the pools of European sailors, although it is difficult to say whether this approached a competitive labour market *per se* of the kind we might expect under mature capitalism.[100] Ultimately, European imperialisms spread and developed in tandem with global capitalism – but this was not entirely peaceful, and thus frequently met with the resistance of the proletarian labour upon which they depended.[101]

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[94] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 113. To compare with Ottoman and Chinese guilds, see: Hanna, 'Guilds'; Grafe and Prak, 'Families, Firms, and Politics', 88–89. Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 136–40, however, describes guild-like institutions in south India, though these did not control and gatekeep production *a la* guilds proper.

[95] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 105.

[96] Verma, *Karkhanas*.

[97] Francks, *Japanese Consumer*, 11–15.

[98] Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 3–4, summarises the rancour surrounding this debate.

[99] For example, the French tried to lure weavers to Pondicherry with the promise of cash advances: Arvind, 'Pondicherry, 666–67. For a wider purview: Parthasarathi, *Transition*, 29–30.

5.2.2 'Unfree' Labour and the Slave Trade

Slavery and enslavement have as long a history in India and the wider Indian Ocean world as anywhere. Akbar may have freed the imperial slaves, but that only proves how widespread slave labour was within the empire; his actions certainly never strived to wipe out enslavement, which would have been impossible.[102]

A boom in the export of slaves from the east African coast via maritime networks across the Indian Ocean began in the ninth century. This was connected to a prolonged period of sustained demand from Muslim societies, especially those in the Arab Peninsula, Persian Gulf, and India.[103] Indo-Muslim states, such as the Bengal and Deccan sultanates, continued to make use of *Habshis* (Ethiopians) into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[104] Indian demand is thought to have increased sharply in the late Middle Ages, probably in connection with the military slave (*ghulam*) system of the expansionist Delhi Sultanate, which was supplied not via Indian Ocean channels but through terrestrial networks reaching into the Eurasian interior.[105]

Of the 63,000 enslaved persons imported into the Cape Colony, 1652–1808, 26.4 per cent were of African origin, 25.9 per cent Indian, and 22.7 per cent Indonesian, but this is only one example, and the makeup differed from place to place. Other destinations in the early modern period – when the Indian Ocean slave trade remained robust, probably growing – include the Mascarenes, Dutch Batavia, and the Americas. European demand contributed to this growth from the sixteenth century yet did not crowd out indigenous demand, which changed according to its own dynamics.[106] Especially remarkable is evidence of the interlinkage of systems of enslavement in the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic worlds from the late sixteenth century, and thus of the entanglement of capitalism's development in the early modern Atlantic world with Asian societies and economic systems.[107] For, as we now know, slavery was the opposite of wage labour – a defining feature of capitalism – and yet played an absolutely critical role in the emergence of global capitalism.

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[100] Nadri, 'Maritime Labour Market'. See, also: van Rossum, 'Running'. For the bigger picture of European imperial labour regimes: Paquette, *Seaborne Empires*, 145–59.

[101] van Rossum, 'Running'.

[102] Moosvi, 'Labour', 251, where Shah Jahan's edicts abolishing forced labour (*begar*) are also described.

[103] Save where additional references are provided, the present discussion draws from the excellent, concise survey by Gwynn Campbell in 'Question'.

[104] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 63; and further notes, below.

[105] See: Kumar, 'Service', for military slavery in medieval India.

[106] Allen, 'European Slave Trading'.

Such interactions do not mean the Indian Ocean slave trade was anything like the Atlantic system.[108] The pre-1750 European slave trade in Asia was neither of insignificant scale – for, perhaps half a million souls were enslaved, c. 1500–1800 – nor should we overlook that it was truly multidirectional in a way that knitted together the Indian Ocean world.[109] Yet, the plantation system of the Atlantic world, which was predicated on the steady supply of enslaved Africans, did not spread very readily in the Indian Ocean world before c. 1750, let alone further inland in the Eurasian interior.[110] Across the Islamic world, captives worked on farms and in the fields, but also served in military and administrative roles, or performed labour in commercial or domestic settings.[111] In India, there was probably a proportionally lesser demand for slaves to do farm work compared to other Indian Ocean economies with greater labour constraints, but forced labour (*begari*) was widespread.[112] Where the enslaved did perform agricultural work, therefore, 'a striking feature of subsistence and small-scale commercial production in agriculture is that peasant slave-owners generally worked alongside their slaves', setting them apart from their enslaved African counterparts in the Atlantic world.[113]

Second, there was no counterpart to the systemic racism that justified – to Europeans – the enslavement and subjugation of people of colour within the Atlantic system, where the primary conception of enslavement was as 'chattel' or 'person-as-property'. In the Indian Ocean world, by contrast, 'there existed a variety of forms of bondage': client slavery, pawnship, rural servitude (e.g., *begari* provided to zamindars), and debt bondage.[114] Understanding why the juxtaposition of the binary categories of free with unfree/slave labour is problematic in the Indian Ocean world also becomes clearer if one accepts that 'the concept of individual liberty was weak', Gwyn Campbell tells us.[115] This meant there was a fairly wide spectrum from freedom to the unfree. Those we might hastily describe as unfree might be able to marry freely, own property, or demand a change of ownership when their conditions were deemed unsatisfactory – which the enslaved of the Atlantic world could not.[116] This all being said, newer research is beginning to emphasise that these indigenous or local systems of enslavement (sometimes casually described as 'benign') interacted with the trans-regional, trans-oceanic, and global circuits of commodity enslavement (the 'brutal' form) – a transition premised on early modern globalisation and imperial expansion.[117]

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[107] Hooper and Eltis, 'Indian Ocean'.

[108] The contrast drawn in this paragraph between Indian Ocean and Atlantic systems is the result of the influence of the vast body of scholarship regarding the latter. A global canvas is not possible here, but an extensive world historical survey of early modern slavery can be found in: Eltis and Engerman, *Slavery*.

[109] Allen, 'European Slave Trading'.

[110] European demand for slave labour from their arrival in the sixteenth century to the colonisation of the Mascarenes by the French was largely confined to their trading-cum-administrative enclaves and plantations; see: Chakraborty and Van Rossum, 'New Perspectives', especially 3–4.

[111] Prange, 'Trust in God', 221; Levi, 'Hindus Beyond the Hindu Kush', 278.

[112] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 142–44.

[113] Campbell, 'Question', 131. See, also: Levi, 'Hindus Beyond the Hindu Kush', 278–80; Dale, *Indian Merchants*, 75–76; Prange, 'Trust in God', 221; Habib, *Agrarian System*, 142–44.

[114] Campbell, 'Question', 135.

Third, is the fact of some slaves' high status, attained before or during their enslavement or upon manumission.[118] Warfare may have been the vehicle for Malik Ambar's ascent (§6.1), but the lives of many military slaves was brutish and short. War also served as a means of Rajput leaders enslaving the elite women of their vanquished foes' households, forcing them into marriages to settle old enmities, for example.[119] Women might also become enslaved on account of tax arrears or other dues, as evidence from eighteenth-century western India attests.[120] Enslavement was not free from violence or brutality in the Indian Ocean arena, therefore, even if it differed widely from the Atlantic system. Only in the present century has the study of Indian Ocean enslavement and the slave trade been coalescing into a small field; the scholarship is steadily becoming ever more granular and sophisticated, helping us tease out points of difference or similarity with the Atlantic system.[121]

5.3 Merchants and Trade

Impersonal exchange is the transaction between agents who do not know one another. In their transactions, one party cannot rely on their personal reputation as being trustworthy or creditworthy to acquire business, and by the same turn, a business deal that goes sour does little to hurt their reputation and thus their prospects. A key feature of modern markets are institutions which take the place of reputation to make impersonal exchange easy. As these institutions became more elaborate, so impersonal exchange at greater frequency and scale became possible, resulting in unbridled market exchange and thus modern economic growth. But what do such institutions look like and where did they originate?

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[115] Ibid, 136. The careful study of manumission also muddies the notion of a transition from being 'unfree' to 'freedom', as some form of bondage or distinct status endured. See: Kumar, 'Service'; Eaton, 'Military Slavery'; and Ekama, 'Manumission', this last examining eighteenth-century Colombo under the VOC.

[116] Chatterjee, 'Slavery', especially 19–20, and *passim*, for a useful overview of the historiography on slavery/enslavement in India in comparative context.

[117] Geelen *et al*, 'Runaway Slaves', most explicitly on 66–68, and *passim*.

[118] A good case is the Ottoman world, where non-Muslims were enslaved in the lands within and beyond the empire's fringe in a system known as *devshirme*. At its height, between the mid-fifteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries, Karen Barkey notes, 'only five grand viziers out of forty-seven were of Turkish origin; the others were of Albanian, Greek, or Slavic origin and had risen from the *devshirme*' – *Empire of Difference*, 124. They entered a range of occupations, however, with those taken into military-administrative service (*kuls*) educated and enabled to climb to positions of considerable power, but others were consigned to agricultural or domestic work in rural or urban settings. See: Toledano, 'Enslavement'.

[119] Sreenivasan, 'Female Slaves'.

[120] Guja, 'Slavery', 165, and *passim*, for an exploration that is attentive to gender, to women's roles on both sides of the 'master' and 'slave' divide, and to their resistance to coercion.

[121] See, for example: Chakraborty and Van Rossum, 'New Perspectives'.

In a provocative body of work on the Mediterranean economy in the Middle Ages, Avner Greif distinguishes the Genoese (Christians) from the (Jewish/Muslim) Maghribis. The former, he claims, held more 'individualist' beliefs and formed corporate bodies – including guilds, city governance authorities, courts and thus the law and legal enforcement of contracts – which were utilised to support exchange. By contrast, the latter were supposedly more 'collectivist' or kin-based and relied on reputation mechanisms and community-based institutions to deter opportunism. According to Greif, these very different dispositions and initial institutions shaped how each group did business across their long-distance networks yet also had longer-term effects – what is called path development. There was legal and organisational change in support of impersonal exchange and efficiency *only* in late medieval Europe – not north Africa and the middle East – even without the support of 'strong' states (and perhaps *because* of this fact and the power of citizen assemblies and urban self-government).[122] Other scholars, in turn, take this as paving the way to the birth in Europe of the early modern joint-stock company, replacing sole traders, family firms, and ethnic or kin-based partnerships, ushering in an 'organisational revolution', and thus helping to explain why the 'West' ultimately grew rich while 'the Rest' did not.[123]

5.3.1 Indians and Indian Ocean Trade

What does this matter to a survey of early modern Indian merchants and trade? A sharp contrast has long been drawn between the sophistication of European trade organisations in Asia and indigenous merchants, the latter characterised as poorly capitalised and little more than pedlars. The latter falsehood has been shaken off thanks to the weight of so much evidence presented by Indian Ocean historians since the late 1960s or so.[124] The 'prince' of seventeenth-century Gujarati merchants, Mulla Abdul Ghafur, left assets worth 8.5 million rupees upon his death in 1718, comprising a mansion, lands in and around Surat, and his shipping enterprise. According to a Dutch list of 1701, he owned 17 of the 112 ships belonging to the port of Surat, which was a remarkable investment given that even the richest and most risk-loving businessman might only own one or two ships.[125] Others, such as Achyutappa Chetti and his heirs likewise owned ships to ply Coromandel trade in the seventeenth century and partook in activities requiring a high degree of capitalisation.[126] One might place them, legendary bankers like the Jagat Seth, or their Armenian counterparts in Asian waters on a par with the patriarchs of the Fugger and Medici dynasties in Europe.[127]

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[122] Greif's arguments are more sophisticated than can be allowed here and have been finessed in response to criticism. See, most recently: Greif, 'Reappraisal'. For more detail: Greif, *Institutions*. For the larger reappraisal of guilds, now seen as broadly positive to the early modern economy, see: Epstein and Prak, eds., *Guilds*.

[123] Harris, *Going the Distance*.

[124] This became crystallised in the so-called 'pedlar thesis' of J.C. van Leur, who otherwise did a great deal to reconstruct the history of pre-modern trade in the Indian Ocean. For a recent, careful, and concise survey of the thesis and its various reiterations by other scholars, as well as the accumulated evidence in rebuttal: Chaudhury, '"Pedlar" Thesis'.

Other contributions, we shall see, have knocked the wind out of the sails of European triumphalism by emphasising the difficulties Europeans faced in Asian waters, their struggle to achieve any kind of dominance, and the necessity of forging partnerships with local agents. In other words, many of those technological and financial innovations that helped the Europeans *reach* Indian Ocean ports – from new ship designs and firearms to the formation of joint-stock companies, stock markets, and insurance markets – did not aid their actual day-to-day business in Asian (and African) markets. Asian business organisation continues to be distinguished, nevertheless, for its reliance on kinship and community, the ramifications of which are profound in light of Greif's contentious arguments. Were Asian merchants like their Maghribi counterparts? Was there a reliance on community-based mechanisms to govern reputation, resolve disputes, and create trust to the extent of inhibiting the emergence of alternate institutions? What implications, ultimately, might this have had for the nature of market exchange and trade and their historical development? There can be no tidy resolution of these matters here, yet they do provide a new way to review the world of merchants and companies in India and the Indian Ocean world.

To begin, let us start in the locality and from there look outward. 'Bania' (*vaniya*) is found littered throughout the contemporary European source material (sometimes rendered as Banyan or Bunyan), a caste-cum-occupational category referring to Hindu and Jain commercial actors. In north India, Bania could be used to accommodate 'eighty-four Jain and Vaishnavite Vaishya clans – Oswals, Agarwals, Shirmali, etc., but also incorporating certain other high caste Hindu groups traditionally associated with trade and commerce.' In the south, it designated Chettis and Komatis, who were 'among the leading Hindu merchant castes', although fierce intra-caste rivalry crackled at Madras, which had to be divided into different zones for the respective groupings.[128] Of the Indian Muslim merchants, those belonging to the Bohra community were particularly important, at least in western India, while those known as Marakkayars and Chulias dominated the Coromandel trade.[129] Arab, Persian, and Turkish Muslim merchants as well as Parsis, Jews, and Armenians were also to be found in the major entrepots and ports.

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[125] Das Gupta, *Collected Essays*, 98–101.

[126] Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 300–14.

[127] Harris, *Going the Distance*, 173–97.

[128] Prakash, 'Indian Maritime Merchant', 436, for citations; Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade*, 133–34.

Banias were the most numerically dominant and perhaps the most powerful, yet the term is something of a catch-all, obscuring a range of specialist functions. Indian moneylenders (*sahukars*) operated throughout the countryside, lending small sums to peasants to finance production, but also dealt in credit to soldiers and local traders; hence, they financed economic production and petty trade. In contrast, bankers (*sarrafs* or *shrofs*) took deposits and made more substantial loans than the *sahukars*, while also issuing bills of exchange (*hundis*) and changing currency. In such respects, they can be said to have greased the cogs and wheels of exchange, but their specialism resided in banking and they mostly do not seem to have become involved in trade itself (some exceptions are broached, below). Trade was the preserve of merchants, the larger among them borrowing from and making deposits with the *sarrafs* where necessary. Trade ranged from local or petty trade, often carried out by someone dealing in a wide range of goods, to long-distance trade, usually in the hands of specialist brokers and merchants confident in dealing in particular goods (e.g., indigo or fine textiles). Additionally, there were Banias – and other communities of merchants, including Muslims, like Abdul Ghafur – who owned ships and those who freighted their cargoes on ships owned by others.[130]

Long-distance trade operated at different scales (Map 5A). First, there was trade between India's regional economies. Bengal, for example, produced surplus rice, sugar, and butter that could either be sent up the Ganges or the adjacent Grand-Trunk Road to other north Indian marts, or via coastal shipping from ports like Hughli on the Ganges delta to ports on the Coromandel coast, around the Indian cape to the Malabar coast, or even to Gujarat. This port-to-port trade around the peninsula has been called 'looping trade', carried on largely by 'country boats' or *dhows*, and was a vital means of transporting bulky and inexpensive but important goods. Gujarat imported many foodstuffs: wheat and other grains by road from Malwa and Ajmer, rice from the Deccan or even from Malabar via the coastal looping trade. Its exports were high-grade cotton and indigo, sent both to Indian and overseas markets.[131] A second level of trade was conducted between the Indian subcontinent and overseas and overland markets. It was flourishing in the early modern period and was vitally important to those empires whose capitals – such as Vijayanagar and Delhi – were deep inland. Or, to put it differently, such interior location was no

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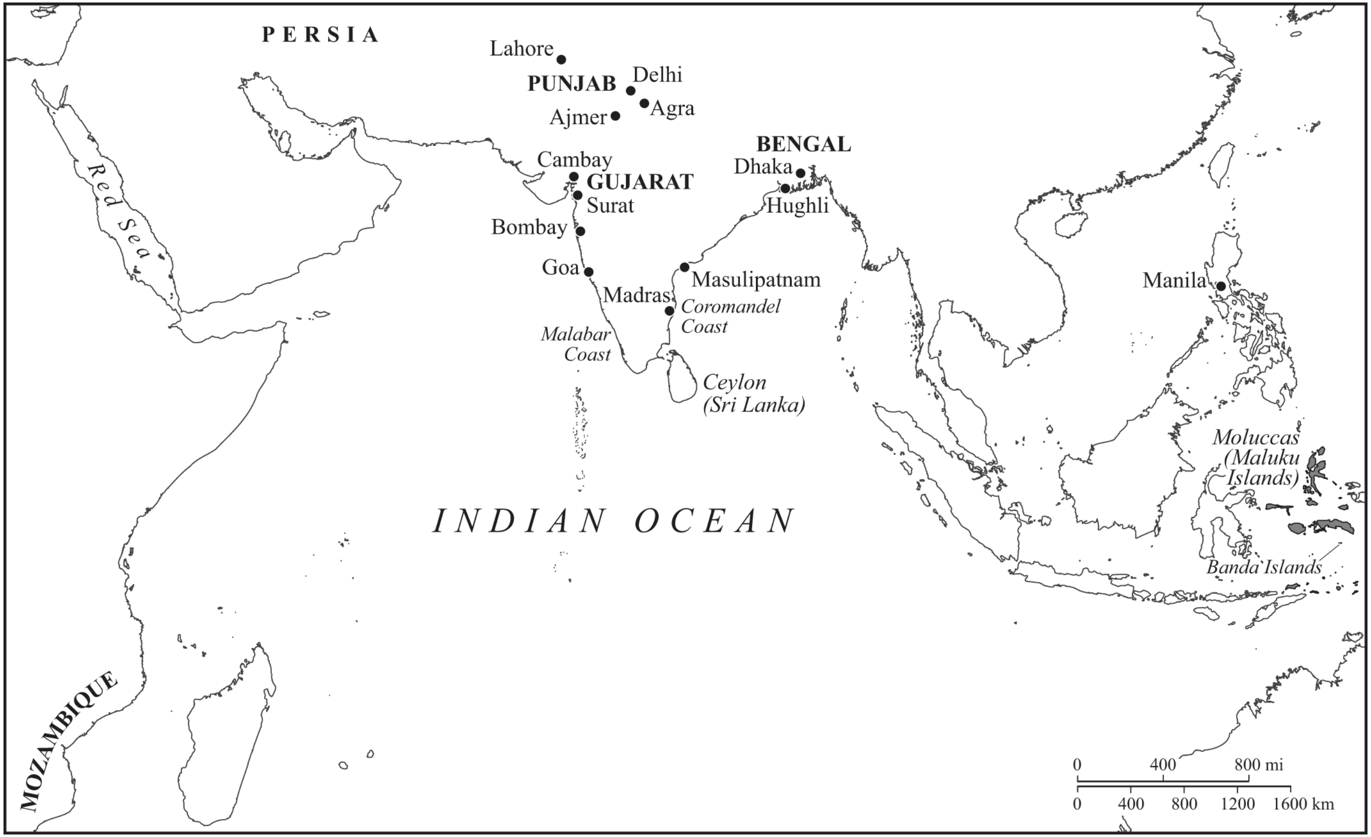
[129] Prakash, 'Indian Maritime Merchant', 441.

[130] Ibid, 442, 342–50.

[131] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 78–81. *C.f.* Prakash, 'Indian Maritime Merchant', 436–37.


PERSIA
Lahore
PUNJAB
Delhi
Agra
Ajmer
BENGAL
Cambay
GUJARAT
Dhaka
Hughli
Surat
Bombay
Red Sea
Goa
Masulipatnam
Madras
Coromandel Coast
Malabar Coast
Ceylon (Sri Lanka)
Manila
Moluccas (Maluku Islands)
INDIAN OCEAN
Banda Islands
MOZAMBIQUE
0
400
800 mi
0
400
800
1200
1600 km

Map 5A India and the Indian Ocean World

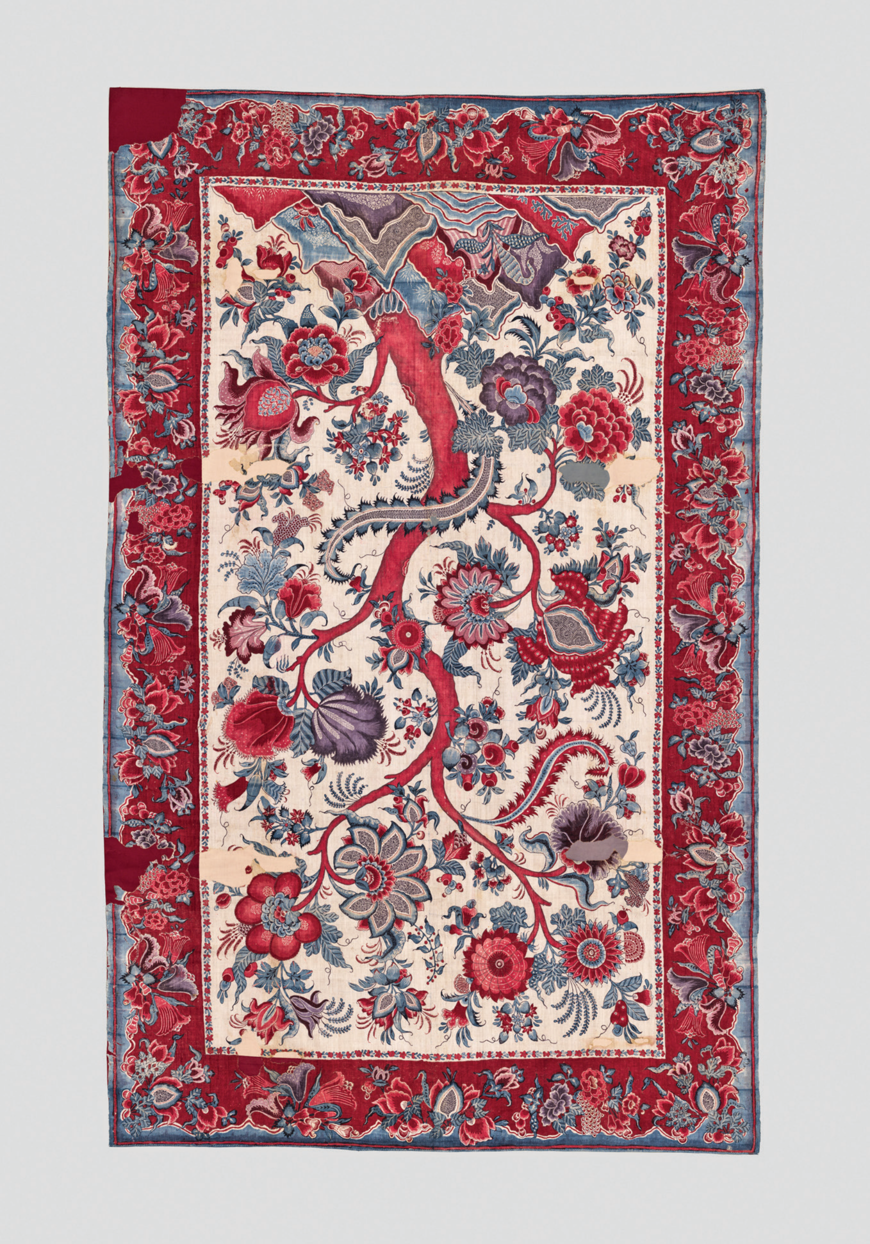


Fig. 5A Painted Chintz (Palampore) for the Sri Lankan Market (Coromandel, eighteenth century)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2010.337

hindrance to linking the state's economic core to the distant or external world of trade.[132]

In the age of sail, environmental factors set limits on ships' voyages: captains had to catch the monsoon winds just right or risk being blown off course, and could only go in a single season where the winds would take them.[133] Given its importance, the monsoon was named across the Indian Ocean world: *mawsim* in Arabic, *mosum* in Hindi, *msimu* in Swahili. The southwest monsoon blew craft northward from April to August, while the northeast monsoon propelled southward voyages.[134] This defined smaller commercial circuits or segments constitutive of the larger Indian Ocean trading system. Movement between these segments was necessary because certain areas specialised in the production of certain commodities, the production of spices being a good example. India's Malabar coast produced most of the world's pepper, followed by parts of southeast Asia, while cinnamon came from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), nutmeg and mace from the Banda islands, and cloves from the Moluccas (Maluku islands).[135]

Having said all this, there was no absolute constraint to larger voyages and the system was by no means locked into place by climate and environment in the pre-modern period. Rather, it was in flux, with the routes, principal ports, and major merchant communities continuously evolving through the early modern period. One example may be sufficient at this juncture, drawn from Gujarat, which was India's overseas trading region and its merchants dominant in the western Indian Ocean.[136] Cambay (Khambhat) was Gujarat's premier maritime city until it was usurped by Surat, probably sometime before the Mughal conquest of 1579.[137] Surat flourished in the seventeenth century but entered a downward spiral in the eighteenth century resulting from the combined effect of political change in the region, in the Mughal Empire, and abroad.[138] Gujarati merchants weathered the storm, however, by pivoting into new ventures – namely, trade with Mozambique and the south-east African coast, including the slave trade.[139]

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[132] See, for richly detailed surveys of the period c. 1500–1650: Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 162–76; Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 46–90; Flatt, *Living Well*, 120–64.

[133] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 13–26, for more on the 'deep structure' of the Indian Ocean world.

[134] Sivasundaram, 'Indian Ocean', 46–47.

[135] Ghosh, *Nutmeg's Curse*, offers a recent treatment highly salient to the themes of the present chapter (viz. capitalism, globalisation, violence, and the Anthropocene).

[136] Prakash, 'Indian Maritime Merchant', 444.

[137] Singh, 'Cambay'. There was a reorganisation of prosperity and merchant activity, with sites and collaborators linked to the Portuguese struggling when the latter struggled around the turn of the century: Das Gupta, *Collected Essays*, 300–14.

[138] Ibid, 98–101, 351–68. See, also: Subramanian, 'Western India'.

[139] Gujarati maritime merchants owned slaves, who worked aboard their boats, and became steadily more involved in the trade in enslaved Mozambiquans to western India over the eighteenth century: see: Machado, 'Forgotten Corner'.

Indian textiles were an important medium of exchange for spices within intra-Asian trade networks, to the extent that India's textile trade helps map key routes, ports, and their productive hinterlands. Cloth was woven all over the subcontinent but production specifically for overland and overseas markets tended to cluster in four areas: (1) Punjabi textiles were mainly destined for markets linked by India's caravan trade with Afghanistan, central Asia and Iran, and even Russia; (2) Gujarat, its textiles sent via ports like Surat and Cambay, principally to overseas markets across the Arabian Sea (i.e., to east Africa, the Arab Peninsula, and Iran); and the cloth centres of (3) Bengal and (4) Coromandel that found outlet via ports like Hughli and Masulipatnam and were oriented to markets around the Bay of Bengal and southeast Asia (Fig. 5A).[140] The early modern Indian Ocean world was thus highly complex, constituted of well-defined yet interpenetrating routes or circuits, of shifting webs of exchanges centred on quite specific commodities, and of a huge and varied cast of actors with well-honed specialisms and a fierce competitive streak.[141] It was into these transactional networks that European merchants and trading organisations had to insert themselves to acquire the spices they so craved, yet a market for Indian textiles soon developed within the Atlantic world itself, to the extent that India truly clothed the early modern world.[142]

5.3.2 Europeans and Indian Ocean Trade

The Portuguese enterprise was formulated as a viceroyalty of the Crown – the *Estado da Índia* (est. 1505), with its capital at Goa from 1510 until 1961. Trade between Lisbon and India was known as the 'India run' (*Carreira da Índia*). Under the king's control, it was part and parcel with Portugal's imperial ambitions to possess and govern territory, motivated by 'mercantilism and messianism'.[143] Early on, however, private trade was carried on side-by-side with that of the Estado, and the monarch's monopoly over the Euro-Asian spice trade faltered precisely at the time when private traders began flourishing in the latter part of the sixteenth century.[144] Euro-Asian trade was linked with intra-Asian trade, and Crown trade with this private trade, therefore: the India run was 'fed' with commodities secured by integrating into the Asian system of exchange pursued (and organised) by the

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[140] See, additionally: Lally, *Silk Roads*, especially 21–46.

[141] A sense of the rivalries and feuds between competing communities can be gained from: Das Gupta, *Collected Essays*, 315–41.

[142] Rich guides to what has been cursorily described here can be found in: Riello and Parthasarathi, *Spinning World*; Riello and Roy, eds., *South Asian Textiles*.

[143] Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese Empire*, 48–55.

[144] Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade*, reassesses the Portuguese enterprise along these lines, while also attending to the role of the New Christians in knitting together intra-Asian and Euro-Asian trade, engendering truly global networks. See, also: Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese Empire*, which is an excellent guide to developments in Asia from their beginnings to the eighteenth century, 87–152, 191–222 being especially pertinent to the present discussion.

Crown in conjunction with Portuguese settlers (*casados*) and the world-circling networks of the New Christians.

Portugal's imperial ambitions proved immensely difficult to realise, amounting to little more than a string of forts that yielded revenues used for funding purchases of Asian goods destined for Europe and also for funding the *Estado's* very existence in Asia.[145] A strategy of monopolising the spice trade by conquering the spice-producing lands likewise gave way to merely regulating trade itself through the issuance of passes (*cartazes*) to ships. Again, the gains proved difficult to realise. Thus, some historians have contrasted the more classic empire in the Atlantic world with the 'thassalocracy' or 'sea-born empire' in Asia, itself described by one historian as little more than a 'protection racket' – especially when viewed from indigenous actors' perspective – effected by controlling choke points such as Colombo (1505), Melaka (1511), Hormuz (1515), and Diu (1535) and patrolling the surrounding seas.[146] Others are confounded by the Estado, which was an 'intricate hub of connections' somehow 'both tiny (being based in seaports) and vast (establishing navigational links between India and Europe)', and 'both insignificant when compared to the great landbound empires of the time, and yet highly influential, when connected with its surroundings' (§6.4.3).[147] As for the Estado's and other Portuguese traders' (modest) financial successes, these were maintained well into the seventeenth century – that is, despite the entry of the Dutch and English.[148]

Unlike the Estado, the Dutch East India Company or *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC; est. 1602, on the back of voyages since 1597) and English East India Company (EIC; est. 1600) were private enterprises – chartered joint-stock companies, to be precise.[149] The EIC's charter, for instance, distinguished it from both the Estado and from the business of Asian merchants, for it gave the Company – a body of private merchants – a monopoly over trade between England and the 'East Indies' and, by additional privileges granted in 1623, the right to exercise the rule of law over English persons in the East.[150] Philip J. Stern argues that the EIC was neither just a company nor merely acted like a state, therefore, but actually exercised executive, legislative, and judicial powers, exhorting even its critics to see it as a 'body politic' (the term contained within its charter). It was a Company-state from the outset, a century and a half before its first conquests on Indian soil.[151] The VOC ought to be seen in the same way, Arthur Weststeijn argues, *pace* Stern.[152]

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[145] Münch Miranda, 'Fiscal System', which reveals how haphazard and precarious the entire system was, particularly following the advent of (military) competition with the Dutch and English.

[146] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 120–22. See: Benton and Clulow, 'Interpolity Law', especially 78–85, for a sophisticated reading of the Portuguese and other pass systems in the Indian Ocean from the perspective of early modern imperial regimes.

[147] Biedermann, *(Dis)Connected Empires*, 16, for this rich historiographical precis.

[148] Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade*; Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese Empire*, 191–26.

[149] That said, we should not understate the companies' relationship to their respective states; see: §6.4.3.

[150] By far the most in-depth and empirically rich study of the EIC remains: Chaudhuri, *Trading World*.

Equally remarkably, the EIC was just one – and a relative latecomer at that – of a plethora of joint-stock companies, corporations, or bodies of merchants constituted in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England for the purposes of overseas trade, including the Merchant Adventurers (chartered in 1407), Spanish Company (1530), Muscovy Company (1555), Eastland Company (1579), Venice Company (1583) and Turkey Company (1581), which merged into the Levant Company (1592), and the Royal African Company (1660).[153] Eventually, largely in the wake of the VOC and the EIC, a number of other European companies were founded for trade with Asia, although they were more marginal actors in various respects and a number were not private enterprises: the Ostend Company (1715–31), the Swedish East India Company (est. 1731), Prussia's Emden Company (est. 1751), a sequence of Danish companies (the first was founded in 1616), and a series of French enterprises dating to 1600.[154]

The EIC and VOC were trade organisations but they were also a carapace for other actors. The most significant of these actors were employees of the companies acting in their secondary capacity as 'private traders'; such freedom – up to a certain point – to pursue one's own commercial interests and make one's own fortune was among the perquisites that drew entrepreneurial men and a fair few rogues into Company service. Their existence also created something of a paradox. 'In spirit and conception,' Emily Erikson argues, the EIC 'was meant to be a monopoly firm that accumulated profits by controlling market opportunities and restricting competition.'[155] In practice, private traders were critical to the Company's success, even as their activities diminished the extent and strength of the corporation's exclusionary monopoly. This is because private traders were pioneers, seeking out opportunities that the Company would otherwise have overlooked.

To succeed in the face of a weak English state that offered little protection or advantage so far from home, and strong Asian elites, who had the capacity to erect significant obstacles, Company servants had to ingratiate themselves or else forge sexual and familial relations with local actors to pursue their private interests.[156] They also had to fabricate informal information networks within the framework of the Company, whose own information networks were hierarchical and designed to communicate between agents, their superiors in Asia, and the Company directorate in London. They did so by using social networks and port-to-port communications to share knowledge between employees. As 'more and new ports [were brought] into the larger network of Company trade', so 'new opportunities, new markets, and new types of commodities' were brought within the corporation's orbit, resulting in its most rapid phase of growth between 1660 and 1700.[157] Consequently, the sum of EIC business – both official and private, intra-Asian and Euro-Asian – eclipsed that of the Dutch.[158] It was this 'decentralisation' within the framework of the EIC that permitted all that activity that cumulatively powered the Company's trading success and its ever-growing importance to England's national economy.[159]

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[151] Stern, *Company-State.*

[152] Weststeijn, 'VOC'.

[153] Many of these are discussed in detail in: Smith, *Merchants*, *passim*, and 7, for discussion of the long roots of early modern corporations in Italian *societas* of the thirteenth and fourteenth century or else in the English guilds.

[154] Gottmann, 'French-Asian Connections'; Idem, 'Prussia'. All of these companies were more cosmopolitan and less 'national' than may at first appear: the EIC was peopled by English but also Scots, Irish, and Welsh, and even a significant number of Frenchmen at a time of Anglo-French hostilities, while many of the north European companies included Dutch and English merchants.

[155] Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade*, 2–3.

In these vital respects, therefore, the EIC *in toto* was not solely the product of English institutional and financial innovation – the so-called 'organisational revolution' – but one whose structure evolved in its Asian operating context and was moulded through the local agency of its employees. In other respects, too, the Europeans owed a debt to local factors, not least the cooperation and collaboration of indigenous actors: sovereigns, who granted them permission to trade; *dallals* and *gomustahs* (agents) and their counterparts outside India, who helped procure the goods needed for exchange; brokers who acted on behalf of traders in their supplications for trading rights at Indian courts; shipowners, captains, and crews, who freighted goods for private traders participating in intra-Asian trade (or 'country trade', in EIC sources); *shroffs*, whose loans financed trade and who changed currencies and issued bills of exchange; and others who helped the Europeans overcome their vast knowledge deficits and information asymmetries.[160]

From the Europeans' perspective, the scale, scope, and complexity of Indian Ocean world exchange systems – from the myriad transactions on the bazaar to financing and insuring long-distance voyages – were massive opportunities yet riddled with risk, so that the involvement and knowledge of skilled

[156] Veevers, *British Empire*, powerfully elaborates this thesis.

[157] Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade*, 3.

[158] Ibid, 4–5, 77–106, for analysis. For the Dutch side of things, nuancing the post-1660 eclipse thesis, see: Emmer and Gommans, *Dutch Overseas Empire*, 17–124, 245–399; Gaastra, 'Textile Trade'.

[159] On this, compare Erikson and Veevers' contributions with that of Mishra in *Business of State*, who argues that the Company was always and very consciously embedded within the ascendant early modern English state.

[160] Münch Miranda, 'Fiscal System', 219–20, for Indian merchants' financing of Portuguese trade. Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 223–25, notes the cooperation of Mappilas with Portuguese despite the latter's avowed animosity towards Muslims in the long wake of the Iberian *Reconquista* (see: §3.1.1). See: Van Meersbergen, 'Diplomatic Repertoires', especially 889–93, for innovative research on the role of brokers – some female – in the pursuit of trading privileges. Such collaboration was not always voluntary, as examples found in: Scammell, 'Indigenous Assistance', reminds us.

local operators was key.[161] Such reliance created the need to identify the trustworthy and to build and maintain trust through various means, although many Europeans remained distrustful of their Asian partners.[162] As scholars uncovered such relationships, so they began to speak of an 'age of partnership' (Holden Furber), 'age of commerce' (Anthony Reid and Kenneth McPherson) or of 'reciprocity' (Michael Pearson). Attention to the Asian side of things revealed a less rosy picture, however, because the reasons for assisting Europeans varied from coercion at gunpoint or foreboding that this was the best or only way to earn a living, to the desire for the 'protection' or the lure of profit by working with the European organisations.[163] Thus, darker characterisations of the relationship of Europeans with political and commercial elites have come into being: an 'age of contained conflict' (Sanjay Subrahmanyam), 'balance of blackmail' (Ashin Das Gupta), 'perceived mutual advantage' (Om Prakash), 'conflict-ridden symbiosis' (Chris Bayly), and 'two-way dependency' (David Ludden).[164]

What of the economic impacts made by European trade? Indian Ocean historians have split hairs over the system-wide effects of European commerce, specifically whether it brought greater integration or eroded past relationships, not least the so-called 'Muslim lake' created by Muslim maritime merchants, which possibly reached its high point in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries.[165] More specifically for India, Om Prakash postulates that the silver influx and the 'sellers' market' – created by growing European demand for certain goods outstripping any increase in supply – contributed positively to output, employment, and incomes, while also improving the money supply and spurring further monetisation, marketisation, and the spread of banking and credit relations.[166] Maybe so, but another way of looking at China and India's silver influx involves recognising that they were silver-hungry, their demand for the metal pushing up its price and thus advantaging the Europeans who brought it, while American supplies helped cheapen silver in certain parts of Europe, privileging merchants and perhaps resulting in *relatively* higher growth rates and other positive effects in Europe compared to Asia.[167]

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[161] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 159–60, for a sense of the risks

[162] van Meersbergen, 'Problem of Trust'.

[163] Nadri, 'Mancherji Khurshedji', offers a forensic portrait of the hows and whys of collaboration. See, also: Veevers, *British Empire*, for examples of collaboration ranging from the peaceful to the violent; Nadri, 'Maritime Labour Market', 358–63, for disaffection, disputes, and desertion by lascars employed in European service.

[164] This synopsis is entirely derived from the excellent historiographical panorama provided by: Vink, 'New Thalassology', 55–56.

[165] Ibid, 55. Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 62–112, surveys the Indian Ocean in the era when Islam was spreading overseas.

[166] Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise*. See, also: Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 91–251, for careful evaluation of the Portuguese, Dutch, English and Danish enterprises' impacts on the character, scope, and scale of trade.

[167] Irigoin, 'Global Silver Economy', especially 272–73, 278–80.

Moreover, the big picture offered by Prakash and others becomes convoluted when examined from the perspective of a port or productive region, trade route or commodity exchange or merchant group, as a few examples stand to show. Bengal, for example, would become the 'bridgehead' of British colonial rule in the mid-eighteenth century. But in the decades immediately prior to the conquest of 1757, the EIC and the VOC's share of trade paled in comparison to that of their Asian rivals even in key commodities such as silk, so perhaps their economic impact was equally modest.[168] There may have been merchants, furthermore, who were squeezed-out by European pass controls and the creation of monopolies, yet scholars have actually emphasised indigenous merchants' agility and tenacity.[169] There were some definite losers, however. There is no doubt about the tragic destruction wrought on the Banda Islands, whose inhabitants were slaughtered by the Dutch in an exceptional but nonetheless brutal act of violence, with the island then repopulated with Dutch settlers but also enslaved persons forced to work on plantations, itself a violence upon the landscape and people.[170]

5.3.3 Trade as a Family Enterprise?

How did Indian merchants and firms organise their long-distance trade networks?[171] Let us consider, as an example, Punjabi family firms involved in caravan trade with central Asia. The patriarch of the firm (the 'principal') would send his kinsmen (acting as 'agents') into the Punjabi countryside to extend credit to peasants, receiving repayments in raw cotton at below market prices in lieu of interest on the loan. This material would then be advanced to urban weavers to produce the kind of cloth in demand in overland markets; again, the loan would be repaid in kind representing the firm's acquisition of textiles at below market prices. This profit would be reinvested further, for agents would depart with the annual caravan and journey to a designated central or west Asian mart, selling the goods upon arrival, and then reinvesting their profits in other ventures. The latter might include loans to central Asian peasants producing the kinds of commodities in demand in north India. Typically, these agents would remain in central Asia for a number of years, returning once they had realised returns on their investments. As new agents joined each trading season, this meant there were typically several members of a family firm in central Asia at any given time, each bringing fresh instructions and information about market conditions for their brethren. As there were several such firms, the result were Indian neighbourhoods – complete with Hindu and Jain temples – in central Asia and Iran. These, however, were largely all-male spaces due to the fact that female family members did not participate in this circulation or, perhaps more appropriately, this elliptical movement (i.e., short periods of movement marked by long sojourns in particular locales).[172] This can be contrasted with Indian family firms spread across the subcontinent (e.g., the Marwaris) and those marked by a higher degree of settlement – closer to diaspora – where migration of male and female family members allowed social reproduction in host societies (e.g., the Chettis).[173]

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[168] Chaudhury, 'International Trade'. See, also: Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 129–39, for the spatially variegated economic and political impacts of the Portuguese.

[169] Prakash, *Dutch*, 222–33.

[170] Ghosh, *Nutmeg's Curse*; Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 146–48.

[171] Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, 131–52, offers some instructive characterisations of Asian merchants.

Compared to their Asian partners and rivals, were European merchants less reliant on family and ethnicity? Corporations – not nations – have lately been spotlighted as the drivers of early modern globalisation, empire-building, and more besides (e.g., from their role in spurring 'scientific' inquiry to stimulating new patterns of migration).[174] Yet, many authors of this new scholarship have consciously disaggregated such corporations, bringing employees – and their balance of official business versus private commercial interest that shaped their activity – squarely into view. They have also shifted away from top-down models of corporate governance toward bottom-up understandings of how individuals – from ordinary investors to company merchants – pursued their objectives, emphasising the critical importance of social networks.[175] English merchants are now shown to be far from the 'impersonal' actors meeting in the abstract space of the marketplace of so much economic theory. Their careers usually began with an apprenticeship or training, whereupon they began forging their social networks. These were cultivated at home and abroad by living as neighbours, attending the same congregations, and brokering marriage alliances that joined families together.[176] The wives and female relations of English merchants also played their part: by visiting, corresponding, gifting, and by nurturing the emotional ties – love and friendship – between women and their families, they supported the advance of merchant capitalism.[177] Through a mix of reproduction and family patronage, furthermore, entry into the East India Company became 'hereditary', to a degree.[178] A broadly similar story can be told of the VOC and the 'social world' of commerce in the Dutch Indies.[179]

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[172] This account draws heavily on Levi, *Indian Diaspora*, itself building upon Dale's *Indian Merchants*, but for a wider purview, see: Lally, *India and the Silk Roads*, 99–124. Scholars have disagreed over the appropriate terminology to characterise such operations because of the varying degree of locomotion versus settlement they exhibited. See, for example: Levi, *Indian Diaspora*, especially 95–120.

[173] Subrahmanyam, ed., *Merchant Networks*.

[174] Pettigrew and Veevers, eds., *Corporation*.

[175] Most recently, for example: Hodacs, 'Keeping It in the Family'; Smith, 'Social Networks'; and references, below.

[176] Smith, *Merchants*.

[177] Finn, 'Love and Empire'.

[178] Veevers, 'Kinship Networks'.

[179] Taylor, *Batavia*, especially 33–51.

As to the uses of family and wider social networks, these were several. Credit was as much a social institution as an economic instrument; social networks helped vouch for trustworthiness and levied added costs to reneging on commitments, smoothing everyday yet nonetheless risky business; and dynasties could perpetuate those values that made them trustworthy and thus creditworthy.[180] Collecting and sharing information was another use, as we have already seen. Family provided social capital, a site for capital accumulation, and a pool of joint resources – material and affective. Frequently, the creation of family also meant the crossing of boundaries: European merchants started families with indigenous or local women, for instance, something to an extent encouraged by the Portuguese and Dutch until the mid-eighteenth century.[181] Without reading Euro-Asian unions as purely functional, born of a desire for contacts with local elites, social capital, trading privileges, and heirs who could be incorporated as intermediaries between the European organisations and local economies, such advantages might have accrued to European men who took local wives in Asia.[182] Corporations were not merely economic organisations but communities, and by turning a cultural and social lens onto their study, we can see how the networks of kith and kin forged and solidified by employees furthered their own business activities and gave shape to their employers' commercial and 'imperial' enterprises.

A corollary of this looking under the carapace of European trading organisations to uncover the carefully constructed social networks of European merchants and their families is that Asian family firms no longer seem like a peculiarity in need of so much explanation.[183] We might more fruitfully interpret the creation of vast social networks with multiple nodes stretching across the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds as a continuation of time-honoured practices as well as a more or less tacit 'emulation' of those techniques particular to Asian societies.[184] At the same time, corporate organisation alone no longer appears sufficient for any explanation of either individual or firm-wide success, so there is no longer a need to thanklessly puzzle over why corporations did not emerge within the Indian Ocean world.[185] We might shed the view of Asian family firms as anachronisms in the early modern 'age of corporations', therefore, and instead appreciate family firms' role in accumulating financial and social capital, in creating trust, and in developing dispersed yet dependable networks of agents working in the family firm's interest.[186] We have little evidence from 'inside' these Asian firms of the kind that has animated recent studies of European private traders and their social networks, making it difficult to robustly test the hypothesis that there were meaningful similarities between Asian and European family operations. Yet, one especially valuable cache of documents reveals how and why the networks formed by families of Asian-origin created and utilised information flows.

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[180] Muldrew, *Obligations*, 58.

[181] Taylor, *Batavia*; Blussé, *Strange Company*, 1–15, 156–259.

[182] See, for instance: Veevers, 'Kinship Networks', 106–07.

[183] Note, however, that family firms were not necessarily the norm, and some Indian 'merchant princes' were unable to pass on their wealth and reproduce their enterprises down the generations, as explored by: Nadri, 'Merchants'.

[184] Veevers, 'Kinship Networks', here especially 107–09, and *passim*.

[185] See, for instance: Harris, *Going the Distance*, 331–64, for a largely counterfactual and thus unconvincing analysis.

[186] Aslanian, *Armenian Merchants*, here especially 100, and 166–201. See, for a statement of the advantages of kin-based networks: Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 100.

When a British man-of-war halted and seized the *Santa Caterina* in 1748, the British came into possession of a weighty postbag of 'about a hundred personal, business and official letters, notarised documents, accounts, petitions, contracts, receipts and formal certificates of appointment' composed between 1745 and 1748 and later deposited in the India Office archives in London.[187] The correspondents made use of Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, Armenian, Persian, and Portuguese.[188] Studied by Sebouh Aslanian and Gagan Sood, these letters reveal the centrality of family and the importance of oral and written communications, whether in reaffirming affective ties and intimacy, particularly between mothers and fathers and their children or between husbands and wives; in securing the obedience of wayward brothers, sons, and nephews acting as agents; in cementing trust in relationships with strangers, including other families who may have been kith, kin, or no more than partners; or as a means of sending instructions and relaying information about market conditions (current prices, profits, supply, demand, competition) or political factors that might impact business.[189]

There were some key differences between Asian and European mercantile networks, nevertheless. In the first place, Asian merchant families only occasionally pursued marriage into different lineages, usually where it provided access to European shipowners or other partners well beyond the bounds of community.[190] In contrast, the apprenticeship and training system meant English merchants' social networks were drawn more widely from their very beginnings. Second, and more importantly, were differences in the situatedness of Indian family firms in the politics of their 'home' states relative to their European counterparts. Banias did not form guilds or other 'economic' interest groups, although they did belong to powerful community-based groups that, 'when in control of a particular occupation, could and did regulate the manner and method of trade', namely the *mahajanis* and *nagarseths*.[191] They did seek recourse in local law courts over matters concerning rights or to settle disputes (§7.3.3), but commoners' voices were otherwise virtually inaudible to imperial government (§4.2.4). True, the most prominent merchants and bankers presented themselves at court, possibly giving them direct access to the king's ear. Yet, there neither seem to have been any systematic ways by which Indian merchant associations could press upon political decision-making, nor were they able to secure the highest posts in the administrative system as their Muslim counterparts in fourteenth to sixteenth-century Damascus and Aleppo succeeded in doing.[192] The ennobling of the merchant, Nusrullah Khan, during Aurangzeb's reign is a rare exception that proves the rule that Indian merchants seldom became members of the aristocracy, setting them apart from the creamy layer of the English middle class who rose to become part of the ruling oligarchy.[193]

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[187] Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 24.

[188] Ibid, 24, and 122–48, on oral versus written languages and the range of lingua francas used in this arena.

[189] Ibid, especially 79–121, 248–69; Aslanian, *Armenian Merchants*, 44–201.

[190] Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 252–56.

[191] Prakash, 'Indian Maritime Merchant', 440. See, also: Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 249 and nn. 5–6; O'Hanlon, 'Petitioning'.

European merchants and corporations were, indeed, more closely enmeshed with politics and government. Apprenticeships created a political community, since apprentices became citizens holding voting rights within the city.[194] A merchant might use his wealth to launch a political career, or an English grandee might buy shares in a chartered company like the EIC, but, either way, Company interests were well-represented among parliamentarians. Thomas Pitt, for example, was an interloper – a private trader evading the Company's trade monopoly – who amassed a fortune, was thus appointed to negotiate on behalf of the Company with the Mughals before being appointed Governor of the Company's settlement at Madras, and was great-grandfather and grandfather to two British prime ministers.[195] In this respect, individuals may have been busy creating family-based networks in pursuit of their private objectives underneath the shell of the EIC, but another result was to make John Company an incredibly important part of the English (later, British) economy that gave it political clout, which repaid employees in turn.

Where does this leave us? On the one hand, recent research softens the kinds of distinctions made by Avner Greif. On the other hand, he might well counterargue that European merchants relied primarily on legal institutions backed by the state, only bolstering these with the mechanisms derived from networks of kith and kin, whereas Asian merchants relied primarily on community and secondarily, if at all, on law or other larger frameworks transcending group identities. This is indefensible, given what we have seen concerning Indians' recourse to the courthouse.[196] As for the development of markets and capitalism, it would be unwise to separate developments in Europe and the Atlantic world from those in the Indian Ocean arena – for they were vitally linked in numerous respects, as we have seen so far in this chapter – let alone describe the former as modern or superior.[197] Well into the twentieth century, after all, the colonial economy had not only failed to wash away or even subsume Indian capitalism, but vitally depended on the ‘bazaar economy’ of indigenous merchants and financiers to sustain everyday economic activity and intermediate between local and world markets.[198] Whether this interdependent dualism was a new development or evolved from prior relationships remains murky, but is suggestive of co-existing varieties of capitalism shaped by local circumstances, rather than one ‘superior’ system capable of entirely flattening others.[199]

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[192] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 110.

[193] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 154.

[194] Smith, *Merchants*, 18.

[195] Wilson, *India Conquered*, 28–29.

[196] Such was his vigorous (and venomous) response in 'Reappraisal' to evidence presented by Jeremy Edwards and Sheilagh Ogilvie that the Maghribis also used legal institutions.

[197] Vink, 'New Thalassology', 48–51.

5.4 The State and Economic Life

> Commerce (*tijarat*) is many times better than statecraft (*imarat*). Statecraft makes one subordinate while in trade, one leads the life of a ruler. The wealth accumulated by a noble is a misfortune, whereas the money earned in trade is lawfully enjoyable (*wajh-i halal*). – *Anand Ram Mukhlis*[200]

5.4.1 Piety and Profit

Commerce brought great riches, which some early moderns had to reconcile with personal beliefs emphasising piety and material simplicity, as Max Weber postulated while thinking of Europeans. Consider, for instance, European burghers’ spending on church altarpieces and the like, which was perhaps not a world apart from Hindu and Jain merchants’ lavish sponsorship of rituals, donations to temples, and construction of *ghats* and *dharmshalas* as part of a similar purification of profit.[201] Remembering the embedded or social character of economic activity also helps to bring powerful and wealthy women back into view. Royal and noble women participated in trade, particularly to Mecca, sponsored the construction of key urban buildings (§4.2.1), and also invested in other kinds of infrastructure (e.g., step wells, caravanserais, *ghats*, ports), both in reflection of their piety or charity and as the wellsprings of further income (i.e., from rents, tolls, taxes, shares of harvests or the output of quarries, etc).[202] It would be incorrect, however, to entirely divorce 'economics' from 'religion' and thus imagine commercial gains as anathema to *dharma* and requiring reconciliation through charitable expenditure.[203] Indian religions were not entirely 'renunciationist', as we have seen in the case of Sikhism (§3.4). The ownership of property, furthermore, was deemed 'praiseworthy' insofar as it furthered duties and obligations to the household; to this extent, the acquisition of moveable and immoveable property was vital to corporations of monks and nuns, for example.[204]

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[198] See: Ray, ‘Asian Capital’.

[199] True, something that can be called a ‘capitalist world-economy’ has subsumed prior and alternate economic systems around the globe, but we might more usefully see this as an incomplete and thus ongoing process forged out of the tessellation of localised capitalisms.

[200] Cited in: Subrahmanyam, *Tagus to the Ganges*, 97.

[201] The observation concerning Weberian theory owes to Bayly, who also pioneered our appreciation of north Indian merchants’ and financiers’ expenditures: Bayly, ‘Epilogue’, 177. That said, India’s mercantile classes perhaps eschewed ostentation and conspicuous consumption in favour of outward simplicity and overt piety to such a degree that India’s greatest capitalists seem not to have nurtured artistic talent in the manner of their European counterparts (e.g., the Medici) and their collective bodies or civic institutions, nor did they play the role – as a class – like that of Europe’s burghers, who took over from princely (and ecclesiastical) courts in steering artistic developments. See: Chipps Smith, *Northern Renaissance*, especially 67–146.

Some orders of monks were highly mobile, their members combining movement between a network of monasteries interlaced over the subcontinent with trade and high-interest moneylending. Women made investments in the architecture that supported such mobility, trade, and banking in the Gangetic valley and Bengal, including monasteries and shrines, but also residential complexes, wells, ponds, and tanks in temple precincts. They were the wives of Hindu Mughal governors and zamindars, or else zamindars in their own right. Together with their Muslim counterparts, they supported a parallel Sufi monastic geography, too.[205] They also loaned and borrowed money from monks, plugging themselves into monastic lineages in support of their independent economic ventures: property transactions, moneylending, the silk and salt trades, for instance.[206]

These links became especially valuable upon entering widowhood, particularly in a context where polygyny was commonplace among the elite. The division of a husband's or father's estates between an often-large number of female dependents necessitated careful, long-term wealth management if a woman was to sustain herself. Through expenditure on the rituals and other needs of holy men, a female zamindar nurtured the bonds of trust underpinning her economic relations with such non-kin while 'ensur[ing] that they returned regularly to her estates, settled them, and expanded both their military and agrarian potential.'[207] Taken with the role of elite Mughal women, the ramifications of such findings are significant. Though women did not voyage abroad as merchants or earn fame as the scions of great banking firms, they nevertheless played the role of investor in pursuit of private wealth (and merit) in India as elsewhere in the early modern world, sometimes even determining the course of empire and globalisation.[208]

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[202] Chatterjee, 'Women', 177–79 and nn. 6–9 for important references.

[203] Bayly, *Rulers*, 168–73.

[204] Chatterjee, 'Women', 181.

[205] Ibid, 189–95. See, for examples of women who inherited *zamindaris* in accordance with Hindu or Muslim law and then sold or disposed of their *milkiyat* rights: Habib, *Agrarian System*, 191 and n.95.

[206] Chatterjee, 'Women', 198–200.

[207] Ibid, 205–06.

[208] See, for instance: Ewen, 'Women Investors'.

5.4.2 Elites and Commerce

There is absolutely no reason to disregard elite involvement in commerce as little more than a lifeline for the provincial gentry-woman facing destitution, therefore. Shopkeeping (*dukandari* or *baqqaliat*) was not above even Shahjahanabad's elite, whatever their scorn for the unseemliness of business and manufacture. Anand Ram Mukhlis (d. 1750), who penned the quip that opens this section, is a good example. Born in Shahjahanabad, Mukhlis combined life as a courtier and litterateur with trade, serving as *vakil* (agent) for the emperor's *wazir* from 1720 to 1748, and lived among Khatri traders and administrators in one of the city's suburbs.[209] When pressed for cash by Nadir Shah's men in 1739, Mukhlis was able to collect fine textiles of cashmere and brocade worth 10,000 rupees from within his house as payment, perhaps having 'received it as a share of profit from an investment contract, or purchased it to sell for a shop of his own', since shops were built into the kind of mansion he inhabited.[210]

Mughal *umara* (nobles, pl. of *amir*) were not tied to the land, and they, too, combined residences and shops. Raja Jugal Kishor alleged he lost some 200,000 rupees worth of goods and 50,000 rupees in cash when Nadir Shah's men plundered his vast mansion and his shop on Chandni Chawk.[211] Mansurpur was the name of an entire complex built by the *subadar* of Awadh, Burhan al-Mulk, next to Kabul Gate and alongside the canal that brought water into Shahjahanabad from the northwest, with shops on either side. In the Ottoman Empire, likewise, those in possession of start-up capital did not demur about setting up shop. The eclipse of *devşirme* and the janissaries' search for new livelihoods motivated many to establish coffeeshops, for instance, which served additionally as venues for political intrigue and mafia-style racketeering.[212] Others took to tax farming (*iltizam*), as in the Mughal world, which Ariel Salzmann views as a deliberate 'privatisation' of the state's resources.[213] It was through the creation of the large commercial estates (*çiftliks*) that cash crops were produced in the Ottoman lands for the European market.[214] It was those older elites left out of these dynamic avenues for enrichment and cast aside by new political realities who took pen in hand to satirise those *nouveaux riches* who sullied themselves with *dukandari*.[215]

Commercialisation made an even greater and quicker advance in the eighteenth century, therefore, and consumer culture permeated ever more deeply into Indian society. But the involvement of elite actors in commerce was not sudden and new to this phase; it was of much longer standing. Aside from the investments of royal women or the relationships forged between princely households and merchants through the Mughal classical age (§7.3.1), are numerous examples from different parts of India and different sections of the elite.[216] At the start of our period, we find the elite in the Bahamani Sultanate closely involved in overseas trade, for instance, while the later Bijapur sultans themselves owned ships at Dabhol, which was an important port for the overseas horse trade.[217] Members of the Mughal royal family owned ships at Surat, which plied the pilgrimage route to the Hejaz. Meritorious but also lucrative, because transporting Hajjis could be combined with Red Sea trade, such investment was more broadly emblematic of the twin pillars of Mughal sovereignty: accumulation and redistribution. Two ships are best known to us because of the furore caused by their capture: the *Rahimi*, captured by the Portuguese in 1613 and owned by a Rajput princess from Amber who was married to Akbar – thereupon renamed Maryam-uz-Zamani – and the *Ganj-i Sawai*, owned by Aurangzeb and captured in 1695 alongside its escort, the *Fateh Muhammad*.[218]

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[209] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 110.

[210] Kaicker, *The King*, 86–87.

[211] Ibid, 86–87.

[212] Çaksu, 'Janissary Coffee Houses'. The broader context and ambit of Janissary activity is described in: Yaycioglu, 'Guarding Traditions', especially 1545–555.

[213] Sajdi, 'Ottoman Cultural History', 18.

[214] Ibid, 13.

[215] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 12.

If the Mughal elite's involvement in Gujarat revolved around the pilgrimage economy, nobles partook in a wider range of commercial ventures in Bengal, and more heavily, too.[219] Provincial notables – *subadars*, *faujdars,* the larger zamindars – were well-positioned to parlay the spoils of their office into private commercial investments, especially if they were proximate to a thriving commercial hub. By partnering with a professional merchant house, they could diversify their assets and income, for who knew when they might fall out of favour. Other servicemen were more hands-on still. Mir Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani was a Persian adventurer who had made a fortune in the diamond trade before ascending through service to the Golkonda sultans to the office *nawab* in 1643.[220] He not only combined political office with an active participation in maritime trade from Coromandel ports but used it to extract concessions from the VOC 'and successfully defy its requirement to obtain passes for sending ships to specific ports in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago' then under its control. His defection to Mughal service in the next decade and his appointment as *subadar* of Bengal in the early 1660s caused only a pivot, not a cessation, of his activities. And where Ardestani (later known as Mir Jumla) invested in long-distance trade, Shaista Khan (d. 1694) is famous for his investment in the local and regional trade of Bengal, particularly in salt and betel nuts, but also pearls and precious stones.[221]

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[216] Women acquired – and were courted for – their material fortunes and social capital before the high Mughal period; see, for an example: Kolff, *Naukar*, 47–48.

[217] Flatt, *Living Well*, 127–64, where it is argued that this involvement was not viewed as 'exchange', but in terms of 'courtliness' which 'possessed a strong ethical character in which skills and objects played a complex role in the formation of the self.' (164)

[218] Findley, 'Mughal Women'.

[219] Prakash, 'Indian Maritime Merchant', 450–52. Aside from Surat, ports further north on the Indus delta – like Thatta and Lahori Bandar – were used in Aurangzeb's and Murad Bakhsh's ventures, as Subrahmanyam has shown; see: Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 27, for discussion and references. As for the Bengali elites' continued involvement in local trade in the eighteenth century, see: *op. cit.*, 54–55.

[220] Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 322–27.

Such men, being well-documented, were merely the tip of the iceberg – part of a large social type whom Sanjay Subrahmanyam and C.A. Bayly have called 'portfolio capitalists'.[222] Often military men or administrators, rather than merchants, many began to acquire landed rights by the early eighteenth century to make the best long-term investment of their position, knowing that their interpenetration of the political and commercial worlds was fragile and probably temporary, as it indeed turned out.[223] The career trajectory and riches amassed by Cardinal Wolsey (1475–1530) bear this out spectacularly, showing this was hardly a uniquely Indian phenomenon. The story of his protégé, Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540), was a little different, moving from a mercantile and/or mercenary career to that of statesman, though he continued to blend money, violence, and clerical service, much as doing so was necessary for the descendants of Jayanti Das to pursue success (see: §7.3.3), albeit at a more local level.[224]

Such investments could be huge: the withdrawal of the Mughal nobility from Bengal's trade in the late seventeenth century has been associated with a decline in the region's maritime trade, for instance. Such a diverse range of involvement on the part of Indian elites – all the way up to the Mughal emperor – puts paid to any notion of their condescension toward 'merchant princes' (*malik al-tujjar*) or the political elites' alienation from business and finance.[225] What about more direct intervention into the economy by the state proper, however? The official Portuguese and French enterprises in Asia were royal monopolies, yet it was more common for European monarchs to grant charters giving private companies monopoly privileges, or for exclusivity to be exercised by guilds. Even the minting of coins or the creation of military units, which we might presume to be under the state's tight control, if not its monopoly, were in many places in Afro-Eurasia the preserve of state-appointed contractors and fairly decentralised (§6.4.1).[226] Exceptions of note include the long-standing imperial monopoly on salt held by the Qing Great State and its predecessors, or the creation of a Safavid monopoly over turquoise by bringing the mines in Nishapur into the Crown estate (*khassa*, equivalent to *khalisa*), both of these commodities being vital sources of revenue to the respective states.[227]

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[221] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 155–59, which includes discussion of exactions (e.g., tolls, market taxes, etc) abolished by Aurangzeb that imperial servicemen were forbidden to collect.

[222] Bayly and Subrahmanyam, 'Portfolio Capitalists', especially 410–13 and 416–18, wherein Ardestani's investments are also described.

[223] See: Parthasarathi, 'Merchants', 200, for this discussion. But see also Bayly's own retrospect on his contributions: 'Epilogue', 181.

[224] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 46–47.

[225] The original 'merchant princes' were the rich *nakhudas* or merchant-shipowners; the European merchants and trading organisations came later; Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 78–91. The notion of condescension toward them – and thus the Mughals' blindness to the European threat – in part derives, perhaps, from the reluctance of Indian rulers to actively protect Indian merchants from the predations of the Portuguese, traceable as far back as pre-Mughal Gujarat; see: Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 12. See, also: Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 115–17.

5.4.3 State Monopolies

The Safavids' fiscal base was, however, much narrower and shallower than their Chinese or Indian counterparts. Avoiding fiscal-political precarity and crisis thus underlay Shah Abbas' (r. 1588–1629) infamous decision to turn the silk-producing areas of Gilan and Mazandaran into *khassa*, to subject the silk trade to state control, and to forcibly relocate Armenian merchants involved in the silk trade to the suburb of New Julfa and insist that they act as the principal brokers and merchants.[228] Other industries were created by the state, with variable degrees of success and varying significance to the domestic and export economies: Chinese-style porcelain manufacture, Indian-style rice and indigo cultivation, and a tobacco business, for instance.[229]

A little later, in 1633, Shah Jahan established a short-lived indigo monopoly in the Mughal realm. All indigo became state property and could only be sold to Manohardas, a Hindu merchant who won the contract to act as sole buyer of indigo in exchange for a payment of 1.1 million rupees at the end of his three-year term, of which 500,000 was repayment of a loan advanced by the treasury to finance the enterprise. Some merchants believed it was motivated by greed, others noticed its inauguration in the wake of the Gujarat famine of 1630–32 that had devasted Gujarati indigo production and consequently ramped up competition and prices in the indigo markets near Agra, where EIC and VOC merchants fought for the dyestuff. Some discerned the influence of nobles with a vested interest in the indigo trade or inspiration drawn from the Safavid example. Of course, the bigger picture – bearing in mind that Shah Jahan was striving to bring more land under *khalisa* at this time – was an effort to increase Crown revenues in the face of expensive wars and building projects.[230] Ultimately, the monopoly met with fierce resistance from producers, indigenous merchants, and the European companies, the latter acting to undermine the monopoly, leading to it being rescinded in 1634.[231]

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[226] See, for example: Perlin, 'Proto-Industrialisation', 77–78. Singh, *Town*, 169–91, offers a forensic account of the Mughal mint and its operation, demonstrating the blurring of a state-run establishment with the appointment of merchants and moneychangers (as contractors?) who also carried on their own private business, as well as the state's limited grip over the mint from time to time. On the plethora of private mints in Britain, for example: Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 202, 208. On the inverse relationship between the extent of central control and the number of regional mints in Safavid Iran: Matthee, 'Mint Consolidation'.

[227] Lally, 'Salt and Sovereignty', especially 651–52; Khazeni, *Sky Bue Stone*.

[228] State control had lapsed by the reign of Shah Safi (r. 1629–42). See: Matthee, *Silk for Silver*, 91–146.

[229] Kazemi, 'Tobacco'.

[230] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 29.

A final example may underscore the creation of monopoly as a response to the fiscal constraints facing centralising states. Until the 1760s, when Malabar came under the sway of the Mysore state, its sovereigns did not gather land revenues. Under the rule of Marthanda Varma (r. 1729–58) and Rama Varma (r. 1758–98), however, Travancore grew from a compact principality into an important kingdom laying along the Malabar coast. One cause was the boom in Malabar pepper from around the 1720s associated with the decline of Surat and its re-export trade in Indonesian pepper to Red Sea and Persian Gulf markets. Once flushed with these revenues, combined with a standing army and a bureaucracy, Marthanda Varma could expand his power. In turn, he established a monopoly to not only secure the revenues deriving from the lucrative pepper trade, but to maximise profits (or rents) to the state. In effect, merchants became agents who bought pepper from producers at fixed prices, supplied the pepper to state depots at fixed prices, and thus obtained a fixed commission in return.[232]

Monopolies like those in Travancore and Mysore were a distinctly eighteenth-century phenomenon. They represent a late flowering of a larger phenomenon – what scholars have called ‘south Asian mercantilism’. This was not mercantilism in the conventional, Smithian meaning of ‘bullionism’, but in the sense of the state behaving *like* a merchant by using ‘the means at its disposal, including coercive means, to control and influence both producers and trading partners’, acting ‘as a merchant, but also as an oligopolist, or in the extreme case, as a monopolist.’[233] More broadly, this resulted in the control of revenue flows through deeper commercialisation; through taxation of trade; and through revenue farming. By the eighteenth century, these manoeuvres often required merchant capital, resulting in the drawing together of the state and mercantile actors, as we shall see.[234]

Private actors may have been responsible for much decision-making before the beginning of the eighteenth century, therefore, but Indian states were not totally hands-off. If we have this impression, its perhaps because the centre devolved many of its obligations to local governors, as was the case in the Mughal classical age. These sub-imperial actors spent money repairing or constructing caravanserais, wells, roads, and other facilities for merchants; made efforts to control piracy and banditry; controlled the price and supply of grain and other foodstuffs; and encouraged not only rural commercialisation, but also the development of certain urban industries and crafts.[235] There was a fine line between expecting local authorities to make whatever undertakings were necessary to keep things running, versus chastening them for any failures or excesses in this regard, the latter including the levying of – sometimes vital, sometimes arbitrary – taxes or cesses.[236] Mughal expansion necessitated more than effective caretaking, however, and so were ushered in measures that not only consolidated the centre's grip on its domains but reduced 'transaction costs' for mercantile actors. Monetary reform was key in this regard, bringing India's economies closer to a 'national market' than at any time before the mid-nineteenth century. One way of putting this fact into perspective is by remembering India's vastness. Or, more parochially, if the union in 1707 of England with its poorer relation north of the border stimulated economic change and brought prosperity to Scots, imagine the impact of imperial integration by the time of Aurangzeb's death in the same year, when the Mughal Empire had reached its largest extent, being considerably more fertile, and its manufactures exported around the globe, making it a sink for the world's precious metals.[237]

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[231] Nadri, *Indigo*, 157–64, for details of the monopoly, as well as sub-imperial level efforts to control the prices and profits derived from the indigo trade in subsequent years.

[232] Das Gupta, Collected Essays, 158–60, 201, 421–56.

[233] Subrahmanyam, *Tagus to the Ganges*, 49, for citation, and 45–79, for analysis along these lines.

[234] Parthasarathi, ‘Merchants’, 202–04.

[235] On the latter, see: Verma, *Kharkhanas*.

5.4.4 Merchants and the State

The Scottish example is especially pertinent in one respect: it reminds us of the hunger for 'free trade' with England and its empire and the crucial role played, therefore, by 'bourgeois' Scotch interests in pushing for integration.[238] Similarly, there is much evidence of Indian magnates' collusion with pretenders to various Indian thrones, including 'outsiders', for Indian merchants supported the Portuguese in the seizure of Goa, Ahmad Shah Abdali in his campaigns into north India (§1.3.3; §7.4), and the Company in its conquest up the Gangetic valley, to take but a few examples.[239] Their motivation seems to have been the short-term profits from such activities as selling grain and materiel in times of war and invasion, and the long-term benefits of political stability and having a relationship to the ruling centre, although the last did not translate into the offer of political office. There has been some debate about when bankers became more deeply involved in Mughal state finance, and we ought to be cautious about backwards extrapolation from eighteenth century or even later material (as found in Karen Leonard's work) to argue for this process beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century (as J.F. Richards cautioned us against).[240]

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[236] Compare, for instance, the outsourcing of security over Gujarat's maritime trade on the open seas to the Sidis versus the system of river fleets (*nawara*) supplied and captained by 'wardens of the frontier' in return for *jagirs* in the marshy Bengal delta, which Gommans explains with reference to differences in ecology: Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 164–65. Surat's decline in the eighteenth century meant a dwindling income to the port from which to pay its naval guardians, while their position on the wrong side of a conflict with the Marathas did little to improve their lot. See: Das Gupta, *Collected Essays*, 154–56. Hasan, 'Fiscal System', provides an anatomy of how the port operated within the Mughal revenue-bureaucratic system, including fiscal demands levied by the centre versus the sub-imperial states.

[237] See: Hoppit, *Dreadful Monster*, 35–85.

[238] Whatley, 'Union of 1707'.

[239] On the former, see: Chakravarti, *Apostles*, 44–45.

Yet, merchants and financiers did eventually become ever more closely entangled with the state, probably after the turn of the century, as they became among the beneficiaries of what C.A. Bayly termed the 'commercialisation of royal power'. This involved the devolution of the perquisites of sovereignty – namely, tax collection – to revenue farmers, many of whom were portfolio capitalists who often relied on Indian financiers as under-managers (where the latter did not take on revenue farms on their own account).[241] Of the many factors underlying this development, a key one was Indian rulers' need for enhanced revenues and for the capital to wage war, whether by rehabilitating long fallow, bringing waste into cultivation, or stimulating improvements in the yield or the value of the standing crop. In return for the right to farm land taxes or tolls, entrepreneurs pioneered these developments and thereby spared the centre much of the associated risk, meanwhile increasing the reliability of revenue streams.[242] This was not an innovation of the period – being centuries old, though viewed by the state as an evil in the Mughal classical age that encouraged the squeezing of the most vulnerable in the pursuit of the farmers' maximum return – nor was its spread in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a uniquely north Indian development.[243] The Balija Chetty brothers, Malaya and Chinanna, for instance, competed together in auctions to gain control of 'extensive tax farms along the coast up to Nagapattinam, including important ports such as Devanapatnam and Tranquebar' while also farming taxes for the Dutch as their tenants in Pulicat, just to the north of Madras.[244] If anything, it had become widespread much earlier in the south compared to the north.[245] In the western Deccan, too, Brahmans elites were transforming their financial power into political power, which proved valuable to the eighteenth-century Maratha state's evolution and expansion.[246]

Being common in sixteenth-century Iberia, the *Estado* farmed out taxes, too, as did the Dutch in their wake in places like Malacca.[247] In all, this development unfolded a little later in India than in the Ottoman Empire, as we have seen, or in Vietnam, where the sale of offices was picked up from 1658, fuelling conflict between the older, patrimonial-bureaucratic order and a newer and more mobile, market-based social sector. It took a further few decades still before it was witnessed in Burma (from the mid-1700s).[248] By contrast, this process began to go into reverse elsewhere. Tax farming persisted in parts of Europe, and many areas of the British economy remained decentralised and in private control (e.g., the minting of coins), yet the British state moved *away* from revenue farming and toward public tax collection in the eighteenth century as part of its steady fiscal centralisation, setting off down the path toward what Wenkai He calls the 'modern fiscal state'.[249]

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[240] Leonard, '"Great Firm" Theory'; Richards, 'Mughal State Finance'; Leonard, 'A Reply'. For a useful evaluation, navigating between the differences and extremes at the heart of the disagreement, see: Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 26. See, also: Alam, *Crisis*, 8–9.

[241] Bayly, *Rulers*, 164–70.

[242] Sheth, 'Revenue Farming Reconsidered', for the varieties of revenue farming estates, the range of uses they served, and the varying mechanics by which they came into being.

[243] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, xxiii-xxiv, for examples from the seventeenth century of offers to buy farms and praise for those who avoided such temptation.

[244] Prakash, 'Indian Maritime Merchant', 450, for citation; Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 303–14, for a biography of Chinanna Chetty.

[245] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 35–37, where both the prevalence and persistence of revenue farming in the south is described; Subrahmanyam, 'Rural Industry', 80, for a fair view of the impact of revenue farming in Golkonda.

[246] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 191–92; Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 339–73, for more detailed analysis.

[247] Münch Miranda, 'Fiscal System', 214–15.

India's wealthiest financiers may have possessed great capacity to extend credit, yet tax farming is a feature of economies where 'credit was less developed, bureaucratic and communication networks poor, and means of seeking additional finance limited.'[250] The degree of centralisation exhibited by the Mughal state has long been overstated, but its collapse unleashed a centripetalism that intensified the problems of state financing for its many successors. This fact as much explains the growth of revenue farming estates in eighteenth-century India as its belated abolition in the Ottoman world during the nineteenth-century era of reform and recentralisation.[251] Thus, we may celebrate the 'warrior entrepreneurship' of arriviste rulers (as C.A. Bayly brought to attention), or the role played by tax farming in smoothing cash transfers, ensuring liquidity, and improving local collaboration in the Mughal state and other long-standing kingdoms (as Muzaffar Alam argues).[252] Yet, in comparative perspective, it was hardly a novel innovation and might even be viewed as a retrogressive development when put in global perspective.[253]

5.5 Conclusion

How were the changes described in this chapter affecting the material lives of Indians by the end of our period? Was labour becoming better or worse off, for example? The evidence on artisans is rather mixed and too limited, though the trend was probably toward a deterioration of their living standards long before the onset of 'deindustrialisation' in the nineteenth century.[254] How about merchants? The generalisation that mercantile actors benefitted from their closer relationship to Indian states in the early eighteenth century has been textured in certain quarters by the observation that some were squeezed out by the mercantilism of eighteenth-century Indian states (i.e., the formation of certain monopolies), while many others did not partake in the commercialisation of royalty. Others still were welcomed by the Company in its need for credit, money changing, and other commercial services, then summarily cast aside by the colonial state once it had finished with them. Indeed, the ease with which financiers and traders were side-lined by the Company in the later eighteenth century, and the retreat of Indian commercial actors into rural property investments until the late nineteenth century distinguishes them from their English counterparts, who had a deeper, often interpenetrating, and more enduring relationship with the state.[255] Thus, having not even ventured into the even less documented world of the countryside, it should be evident that our understanding of how particular groups in particular places fared over the early modern period is woefully limited. In fact, even the macro-level picture of economic growth or decline in certain provinces or regions is sketchy, at best, and hotly contested, at that.[256]

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[248] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 181, 441.

[249] He, *Paths*, especially 51–77. The unevenness of this process – not least the persistence of tax farming and contracting out in Scotland, which was poorer, less economically integrated, and less politically centralised – proves the point being made here; Hoppit, *Dreadful Monster*, 38.

[250] Sheth, 'Revenue Farming Reconsidered', 905.

[251] That said, tax farming persisted alongside the reorganisation of the Ottoman postal system, a process that involved private contractors and thus supported provincial actors, yet helped strengthen the centre by improving the flow of information and coordination of activity, so that neither decentralisation nor centralisation can be said to accurately describe what was happening to the Ottoman state: Koh, 'Ottoman Postmaster'.

[252] See: Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, xxiii, for critical discussion and references.

[253] On this point, I am inclined to agree with Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, xxiii. A similar argument has been made in: Ágoston, 'Military Transformation', which compares the trajectories of state (de)centralisation, fiscal capture, and military capabilities and the degree of their control.

What does emerge through the broad strokes, nonetheless, is how much of economic life had been engulfed by the market by the mid-eighteenth century. India's experience was in common with that in other parts of the world. Before the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, according to Victor Lieberman's grand global survey, the vicissitudes of the market's spread were linked to climatic change. But from then on, the growth of trade at various scales was a key driver of deeper rural commodification and increased specialisation across large parts of Eurasia, something the evidence from south Asia broadly supports.[257] In turn, this supported the development of successively more centralised and integrated states (§7.5).[258] Yet, lest we celebrate such phenomena, we might remember that the early modern period witnessed such a dramatic and increasingly systematic change in land use – from the clearance of forest to sowing wholly new crops in the soil – that one cannot help link it to the beginning of the Anthropocene. And, to make explicit a theme running through this chapter, these developments were tied to the channelling and systemisation of coercive power in connection with landed right.

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[254] Parthasarathi, 'Historical Issues'; Parthasarathi, 'Merchants', 206–09. Parthasarathi, *Transition*, not only fleshes out this thesis, but also offers (on 9–42, especially) a rich portrait of how weavers worked, their training, living standards, and relations with merchants in the decades to 1750.

[255] Subramnian, *Indigenous Capital*, for this process in western India.

[256] See, for instance: Marshall, ed., *Eighteenth-Century,* 10–14.

[257] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. i, 48–53, 112, 211. Note: Lieberman variously gives the turning point as 1400 and as 1500.

[258] A valuable explanation of the link between trade and premodern centralisation is offered by Lieberman in *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 179–81.

Capitalism ought, theoretically, to sweep away pre-modern institutions (such as slavery or caste) and replace them with wage labour and 'modern' market-based exchange and productive systems. It could co-opt these very same institutions, and often did so: enslavement was and remains part and parcel of the derivation of profit and the process of accumulation.[259] In the early modern Atlantic world, enslavement was pivotal to capitalism's historical development – namely, the transition to industrial capitalism – for it created the wealth, opened new markets for manufactures, and was used in the production of cheap calories for workers, without which industrialisation might not have taken off.[260] Relatively new evidence suggests that the enslaving of Asians by Europeans and their collaborators was also linked to this development. As for enslavement and unfree labour within India and the Indian Ocean world, this was probably growing, yet was seldom linked to the spread of novel economic systems such as the plantation complex. All this suggests globalisation distinguished and shaped the development of early modern capitalism, marking what at first may have appeared as a subtle break with the past.

What also emerges through the broad strokes is the dawn of 'commercial society' in early modern India. Economic historians have debated its advent in Europe, but it was probably in the sixteenth century, and thus long before the eighteenth-century 'commercial revolution' (and the 'consumer revolution').[261] They have also debated the underlying mechanics. One idea is that there were a series of worldwide 'industrious revolutions', from western Europe to Tokugawa Japan. Operating in a context of limited technological change, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century households simply increased their production by working harder, thereby generating the surplus – put out on the market – that permitted their increased consumption.[262] Of course, commercial society did not develop in one fell swoop, but through a series of changes, often beginning with simple adjustments to housing and diet in pursuit of greater comfort and nourishment, and then escalating to more and finer things.[263] The origins of a household's possessions showed a concomitant outward spreading, from local manufactures to global goods. This improvement in material standards of living was becoming more all-encompassing, yet was also geographically and socially uneven, occurring earlier in cities or ports and places close to them, while developing much faster among certain occupational groups or those of certain status and wealth in ways that deepened 'class' divisions.[264]

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[259] For what 'theory' says about capitalism and institutions like caste, and the latter's co-option, see: Mosse, 'Caste'.

[260] Edwards *et al*, 'Capitalism in Global History'; Burnard and Riello, 'Slavery'.

[261] Muldrew, *Obligation*, 20–21; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 47–59.

[262] de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, for now canonical work on Europe. See: Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, 49–59, for wider application of the idea.

[263] Trentmann, *Things*, 108, for subtle variations in this manner between Japan and northwest Europe.

Globalisation played an important role in the formation and evolution of commercial and consumer societies. The steady introduction of a range of new goods to global marketplaces, combined with the deepening integration of production sites with centres of demand, stimulated new and increasingly cosmopolitan material cultures and a new hunger for 'things' – a 'consumer society' – into being, touching all levels of society, rich and plebeian, free and even the enslaved alike.[265] Attention to this has led to the development of a sub-field known as global material cultural studies, which has helped reshape – and decentre – early modern history by shifting our gaze from the study of companies and trade between Asia and Europe, to the study of people and the material goods they gave pride of place, these goods often moving through ever-more globalised networks of exchange.[266] Of course, capitalism is not necessary for consumer society, which has taken root even in as hostile a clime as the Soviet Union, a fact Frank Trentmann's world historical survey of the subject reveals.[267] The genesis of consumer societies, however, went hand-in-glove with the development of capitalism(s) and its imbrication in early modern globalisation.

Thus, consumer societies also looked different around the world and over time, reflecting the uneven development of capitalism and its frequently quite vernacular character. In seventeenth-century Britain and the Netherlands, for instance, consumer societies were propelled by innovation, novelty, and variety to a greater extent, according to Trentmann, than those appearing earlier in Renaissance Italy or in Ming-Qing China, where antiquity was more revered even as new goods and forms of sociability sprang up. Trentmann's search for the causes of these differences drags him into the debates about the Great Divergence and 'industrious revolutions', none of which he deems satisfactory, although his own solution actually comes close to Parthasarathi's arguments about the role of the state in northwest Europe in spurring import-competing innovation.[268] Trentmann also observes that the emergence of consumer societies were uneven in another respect, appearing earlier (in port cities, for instance) or penetrating more deeply in some contexts than others (namely, among merchant communities and the bourgeois).[269] In these spatialised and temporal differences we find a close correspondence to the lumpy or uneven geography of capitalism, its agents, and the dynamics of its development. It permits us to place early modern India within a larger historical symphony without flattening-out its crucial variations on the theme.

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[264] Muldrew, *Obligations*, especially 21–36, 51–59, 69–90.

[265] See: Lemire, *Consumer Cultures*.

[266] For an excellent survey of the entangled historiographical advent of global history, material culture studies, and the shift from the study of companies/corporations to things, see: Gerritsen, 'Global Lives of Things'.

[267] Trentmann, *Things*.

[268] Ibid, 71–79.

[269] Ibid, 93–94 and *passim*.

We have precious little insight into the *mentalités* of early modern Indians (§3.4), making it impossible to convincingly speak of a commercial sensibility, but there can be no doubt about a commercial society – if not also a consumer society – in the making. There were also markets for violence (§6.1) and steadily developing markets for artistic patronage (§9.3), both with patrons and clients and buyers and sellers. Ordinary people, too, participated to an increasing extent with marketised exchange, especially in cities. By the mid-eighteenth century, Shahjahanabadis could purchase a couplet or chronogram in the bazaar, perhaps from the very same poets and wits who entertained the nobility in the refined environment of the *mehfil*.[270] Other dimensions of an early modern Indian consumer society are evinced by, for instance, changing notions of property (from communal to private or 'enclosed', to use the English historian's parlance), or in production of entirely new cash crops (e.g., tobacco) and the novel forms of sociability these engendered (§4.3.1). All these deserve greater examination in the context of early modern India, as they have in Tokugawa Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and much of Europe.[271]

We ought not lose sight of the darker aspects of commercial society and consumerism, however. Corporations, not the state, drove England's overseas expansion, for merchants relished the 'possibilities for investment in land, property and empire – even the development of new industries and crafts' that came with international trade.[272] Corporations also provided a model for the organisation of colonial government, as in Ulster and Virginia, which were spearheaded by London's merchant community.[273] In the course of their overseas expansion, they came into conflict with competitors and with indigenous powerholders; this was the context to their militarisation.[274] To view the English and other European trading organisations in Asia only as commercial actors – whether by narrowly studying trade or by opening our eyes a little wider to the world of goods and cultures of consumption they engendered – blindsides us to their role in the manufacture and trade of arms and the making of violence.

In Britain, the state relied on contractors and sub-contractors for the manufacture and delivery of ordnance well into the late eighteenth century, even into the next century. In a context of a limited number of specialist manufacturers and resultant constraints on overall supply, the British state also competed with such institutions as the East India Company, whose healthy trade in arms, combined with the need to equip its steadily expanding military from the 1740s, served to dramatically ramp up demand for firearms. Indeed, as Priya Satia argues, there was an incredibly deep and complex, sometimes competitive yet other-times symbiotic entanglement of the East India Company, the Royal Africa Company, and other chartered companies with the British firearms industry. The latter was itself related to British financial institutions, as both were largely in the hands of Quakers. These financial, manufacturing, and trading businesses were also enmeshed in British economic institutions – namely, the Bank of England and the Royal Mint – and the British state. Thus, financial networks, technological innovation, and the imperatives of virtually relentless warfare were all tightly interwoven in industrialising Britain and its expanding empire.[275]

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[270] Kaicker, *The King*, here 108.

[271] Quataert, ed., *Consumption Studies*; Francks, *Japanese Consumer*, especially 1–73, which looks at urban *and* rural consumer society.

[272] Smith, *Merchants*, 13. See, by contrast, critique of the attention given to Indian 'portfolio capitalists' – revolving around their fleetingness and, hence, inability to penetrate Indian states in the manner of 'the *liaisons dangereuses* between governing and mercantile elites in Europe' – highlighted by Palat in *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 21.

[273] Smith, *Merchants*, 214–15.

[274] *C.f.* Ibid, 33.

On the one hand, there was perhaps something highly distinctive in the way public versus private, state versus market, government ownership versus commercial investment in the state were blurred and sometimes inextricable in Britain. This helps us explain the strange fact of British economic and political hegemony, which slowly began to develop around the tail-end of the period studied in this book. On the other hand, the British in Asia were relative latecomers to the conjunction of commerce and hard power; for much of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, they were comparably less militarised than their Dutch and Portuguese counterparts, as the next chapter describes. All this points us back to the imbrication of capitalism, globalisation, and violence – something of which we have largely lost sight in the wake of the global and cultural turns in early modern history. Against this, the next chapter puts violence centre-stage, using it as a lens to reconceive the social, political, and military history of early modern India.

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[275] Satia, *Empire of Guns*, especially 25–180. See, also: Irigoin, ‘Global Silver Economy’, 280–81. Smith, *Merchants*, 144, 175–206, offers a different image of the bargaining power of the English state vis-à-vis merchants, and vice versa. Erikson, *Between Monopoly and Free Trade*, 40–42, describes the relationship of state capacity to the corporation.

6 Violence

In 1401, Ibn Khaldun came face to face with Timur.[1] Born in north Africa in 1332, Ibn Khaldun rose rapidly into high office and acquired his reputation as an intellectual luminary of the Arab world, not least on account of his published works. His life was peripatetic, with periods spent in southern Spain, across north Africa, and the Arab peninsula, and it was toward the end of his life – while serving as the *qazi* of Cairo in the service of the Mamluk sultan, Faraj (r. 1399–1405, 1405–12) – that he reluctantly accompanied his master on a military campaign to Damascus to fight Timur. Such was his fame that he was invited to attend on the world-conqueror, engaging in a series of discussions that spared him and his defeated colleagues on the ill-advised campaign. Ibn Khaldun thereafter returned to the office of the *qazi* and died in 1406 (a year after Timur), but his writings garnered considerable influence across and beyond the Arabic-speaking or Muslim worlds, this influence enduring down the centuries.

One thesis, pertinent to the subject of this and the following chapter, derives from his *Muqaddima*. Of central importance to his thinking, which was shaped by analysis of the Maghreb, Arabia, and central Asia, was the relationship of two worlds: that of rural civilisation, which is characterised by the simple, pared-back life of peasants and pastoralists, and urban civilisation, which took hold around areas of surplus production, permitting not only material luxury, but also complex political and social organisation. These worlds were at once opposite yet complementary. In a spatial or geographic sense, they were interdependent because peasants and nomads needed or enjoyed the riches of urban centres while sultans and their subjects depended on the resources – such as mobile military power – from the realm of pastoralism.

In a temporal or historical sense, too, Ibn Khaldun conceived the two worlds as intertwined. The rusticity of rural civilisation was the ever-present past. It reflected a prior, even embryonic, stage of historical development. Yet, it also contained the vital ingredients – such as the resources of coercion – required by societies at the more advanced stages of historical development,

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[1] The discussion that follows draws on: Cheddadi, 'Ibn Khaldūn'.

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persisting long after they had disintegrated. The extravagance of urban civilisation, by contrast, was both a culmination and an end point. This is because *mulk* (power, sovereignty) can be obtained only through *ʿasabiyya* (solidarity born of blood ties, real or fictive), and is its logical conclusion according to Ibn Khaldun. Through a capable and charismatic leader, men from the rural world might be bonded together to defend their territory, before being lured by the rich pickings of urban centres to raid or conquer. The leader of the *ʿasabiyya* might establish himself as a dynast of a *dawla* (state), but from there things start to unravel. The bonds formerly based on blood or genealogy give way to those based on marriage alliances, leading to divisions into families, parties, and factions, which are an inherently unstable basis for *mulk* and *dawla*.[2] The result of these divisions and the increasing remoteness from rural civilisation is the inability to mobilise and channel resources to sustain power and authority, with the state eventually disintegrating and becoming easy pickings for a new conqueror and his kinsmen. According to Ibn Khaldun, therefore, 'cycles' characterise the history of states or empires. Although his empirical base never extended so far, Ibn Khaldun's thesis nonetheless has purchase among historians of India, China, and other parts of Asia, as we shall see.[3]

The rise and fall of various Indian dynasties after Timur's invasion of 1398 can be partly explained by the reworking of these ideas, which serve as our point of departure for an analysis of political power in the present and following chapter. The focus in this chapter is on what can be called 'hard power' and political violence. The possession of hard power and its underlying resources (soldiers, weapons, tactics), and the ability to successfully wage political violence (wars of conquest, pacification campaigns, the suppression of rebellions), was of fundamental importance in carving out a kingdom, consolidating authority, and keeping rebels at bay. The more peaceful routes to maintaining or even enlarging the kingdom's borders, such as the brokering of (marriage) alliances or the incorporation of collaborators and erstwhile opponents, was only possible where a ruler had already demonstrated their strength. With this in view, the following sections of this chapter consider each of the following matters, in turn: Upon whose services did Indian (would-be) rulers depend when making war and political violence? How can we understand their participation? How did Indian rulers justify violent conflict and reward victorious participants? And how did military technologies and their evolution effect Indian warfare and, ultimately, the power of Indian states?

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[2] For a careful discussion of *dawlat* (or *daulat*) in discourses of sovereignty as they evolved in the Indian context from the time of Timur's conquests to the reign of Shah Jahan, see: Kaicker, *The King*, 58–65.

[3] Wink, 'Post-Nomadic Empires', for discussion of how the early modern Ottoman, Mughal, and Qing dynasts and their writers – wary of their 'decline' being seen as inevitable, *pace* Ibn Khaldun – modulated the latter's ideas.

6.1 The Economy of Violence

Shahjahanabad has been romanticised as a dazzling city of cosmopolitans.[4] But it was a city founded on contrasts – of mansions surrounded by mud huts, of men of the pen rubbing shoulders with men of the sword (§7.2.3).[5] And it, too, had a dark underbelly peopled by an underclass, by the unscrupulous, and by the politically restive and the criminal. In this, Shahjahanabad was much like other early modern capitals, such as Istanbul, albeit without the brawling sailors and the near-constant threat posed by restless janissaries, or London, although not nearly as dangerous, dirty, and rude as that city and its inhabitants.[6] A Mughal nobleman or *amir* had always been expected to maintain a certain number of troops in return for his salary, but he was also free to run his household as an autonomous *sarkar* (administration), usually choosing to complement his harem, household staff, and team of clerks with a military contingent.[7] This last was not only put to the task of protection, but also to exert its brute power in policing and extracting revenue from payees. Such contingents were formed of permanent retainers, loyal to their master, but also freebooting troops and toughs for hire (*sih-bandis*), much held in contempt and many of them of Afghan, Abysinnian, and Turani extraction.[8] Before its twilight years, therefore, men of arms and skilled fighters from far and wide were already prowling the dark and narrow lanes outside the palace walls. Some might be policing the city (§4.2.2), others forming gangs to burglarise Delhi's grand mansions and shops.

Several of the men patrolling the city streets in the 1780s were in the employ of a shadowy figure, 'Himmat Bahadur'. He fought on the Mughals' side against the Afghans and Marathas at Panipat in 1761 and with the combined Mughal-Awadhi forces against the British at Buxar in 1764. He brought down a Persian adventurer in the 1770s and had been instrumental in the ascendance of several Maratha leaders in the 1780s. But in 1787, he colluded with an Afghan warlord hungry for treasure, who proceeded unimpeded to the imperial palace, where he held the imperial family captive and even blinded the Mughal emperor. Himmat Bahadur's part in all this was motivated not by a hatred for the Mughal ruler, but by his desire to avenge being wronged by one of the Maratha elites – an endeavour in which he succeeded. Himmat Bahadur's final act would be to help the British defeat the Marathas in 1803, which transformed the East India Company into the paramount power in south Asia. He was a man who was motivated not only by material rewards, but also by honour and loyalty; whose tentacles of power reached widely across the subcontinent and whose allegiances were shifting; and whose command of violent resources could as easily be put to the task of protecting ordinary city folk as defending great or growing empires.[9] His life is a useful prism, therefore, through which to understand political violence in south Asia.

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[4] Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 150–60.

[5] Prosperity was the cause of social changes – including the growth of the nouveaux riches as well as a new underclass – that made the imperial capital at once more wealthy and turbulent by the early eighteenth century: *The King*, 78–96.

[6] Take, for example, one Khannan, a beef-butcher by profession but also a professional and fabulously wealthy thief; ibid, 82. A rich portrait of the violent disorder in Ottoman Istanbul can be found in: Boyar and Fleet, *Social History*, 89–121; Yaycioglu, 'Guarding Traditions', 1549–550, on the Janissaries' role in making the urban (dis)order. Thomas' *Pursuit of Civility* describes the barbarousness or rudeness of the English in their own eyes and in those of European contemporaries, and the roughness of Londoners, more particularly. See, also: Lincoln, *London*.

[7] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 161–63.

[8] Kaicker, *The King*, 257–90 for references to such figures amid the study of urban riot and disorder.

6.1.1 Marketised Violence

This vignette of Shahjahanbad in the 1780s not only offers a window onto the political landscape of the later imperial period; it also helps sketch the kinds of men who were ready to make violence, the resources at their disposal, and something of their *modus operandi*. Before proceeding, it is worth observing that this portrayal of an all-male world may be deceptive, for the role of women in politics – and the making of violence for the purposes of conquest or as piracy – has been given little explicit attention in Indian and wider world history (§7.2.2).[10] But this is not to suggest that that the study of violence in early modern India has produced an especially rich historiography; far from it.[11] Indian historians have largely focused to date on warfare and some have analysed the market for military labour, yet the latter was only one part of a much broader economy of violence.

On the demand-side, this economy could be made up of rulers, warlords, and military entrepreneurs representing those patrons and clients demanding the services of violent men, whether to create state regiments and the private armies of regional grandees and royal pretenders, or rural and urban militias, police forces, and gangs of armed men supporting fiscal agents responsible for the maintenance of law and order. Among those who supplied their 'labour', whether as (un)armed brawn or as skilled combatants, were fighters belonging to guilds, not to mention highway-men, outlaws, bandits, and buccaneers, and various kinds of footloose strongmen, wrestlers, martial arts experts, or other skilled combatants in possession of anything from simple weapons such as pikes or sticks, maces and spears (Fig. 6A), to archers and to those toting the

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[9] For other examples of men skilled in fighting or use of weapons switching between different types of protection services and soldiery as the market and demand dictated: Kolff, 'Peasants', 249–50.

[10] See, however: Paranque *et al*, eds., *Powerful Women*.

[11] Indicatively, see: Anthony *et al*, eds., *Cambridge World History of Violence*, which contains only one chapter on south Asia (by William Pinch, summarising his *Warrior Ascetics*), but several each on the Ottoman world and east Asia, with the lion's share on Europe and its colonies. The work on non-European locales has developed more gradually and more recently: Robinson, *Bandits*; Tong, *Disorder Under Heaven*; Barkey, *Bandits*.

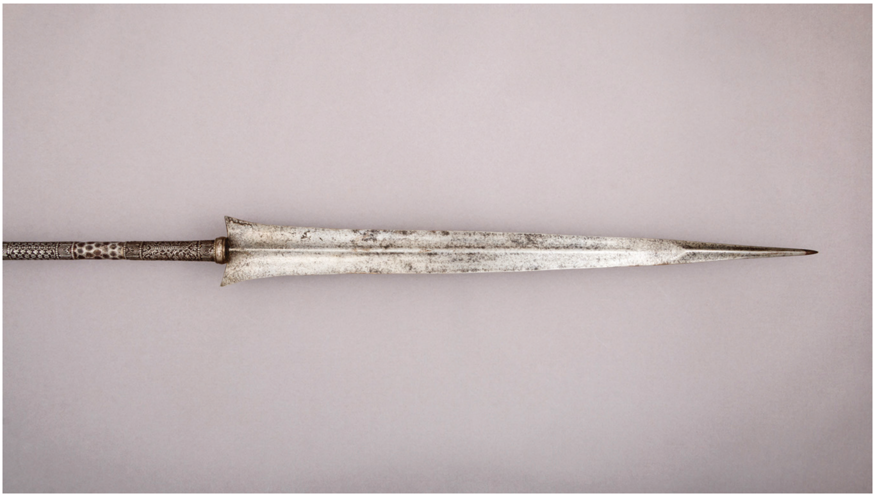

Fig. 6A Spear (steel; south Indian; possibly seventeenth century)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 36.25.1952

more sophisticated firearms developed in this period (arquebuses, muskets, matchlocks, flintlocks).[12] In early modern India, the broader landscape of the economy of violence encompassed rural sports such as *pata hilana* (fighting with wooden swords), *rustam khani* (stick fighting), and *tir andazi* (archery), as well as martial arts training centres or *akharas* in both towns and countryside, some organised by monks.[13] More broadly, the Indian peasantry appears to have been well-armed and able to effect its resistance to unwanted overlordship where its services were not used by the same.[14]

There was more than a mere rough undercurrent to the early modern world, for it was peopled with men ready to make violence.[15] The state's monopoly over violence, as Janice E. Thomson argues, is 'neither timeless nor natural' but of relatively recent genesis; until the modern period, most states found themselves trying to regulate the propensity for violence and its patronage as a necessity, if not actually transacting in a competitive marketplace themselves.[16] There was no single market, of course, but a series of imbricated markets segmented by geography, by identities (real or imagined), and by the skills of participants, although the agility and mobility of some actors meant they could switch from one locale or function to another.[17] Rulers and their nobles naturally had to reach into these local pools of violence and transact on the market for the services of armed men in order to wage political violence. One early eighteenth-century text outlined which 'martial clans' could be recruited into a *mansabdar's* service and in what proportion of their total contingent: Afghan nobles could recruit up to two-thirds of their men from among their own, for example, whereas Uzbek nobles' forces were more ethnically homogeneous.[18] The growing market for military labour in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries strengthened the hand of landed elites in control of men (e.g., zamindars, *deshmukhs*), military contractors, and new groups espousing a martial ethic, meanwhile deepening the militarisation of local society and making labour more mobile, especially in the south.[19] The focus here and in much of what follows rests upon labour deployed in combat, but non-combat labour – encompassing blacksmiths, carpenters, stonemasons, miners, boatmen, and builders, not to mention all those provisioning the front lines – was probably also marketised to a degree.[20]

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[12] See, also: Lally, *Silk Roads*, 75–79.

[13] Kolff, *Naukar*, 28.

[14] Ibid, 1–31.

[15] The inspiration, here, comes from J. R. Hale: *Renaissance Europe*.

[16] Thomson, *Mercenaries*, 1 for citation, and passim. Even nowadays, the state cannot claim to possess a total monopoly in the face of pirates and private armies: Colás and Mabee, *Mercenaries*.

6.1.2 Military Slavery

At the outset, however, it is worth stating that the nature and degree of marketisation probably varied, especially since some participants were not transacting as free agents on the open market as economic theory might have it. A mixture of coercion, especially over clan or lineage members by their leader or superior, and even corvée labour were necessary to amass fighting power in the premodern world, as in Japan on the eve of Tokugawa rule (est. 1603).[21] Across the Islamic world, particularly on the 'frontier' – described as 'politically unstable and socially fluid contexts in which hereditary authority was weak' – the practice of capturing non-Muslims for military service persisted through the medieval and early modern periods.[22] The 'human tithes' (*devşirme*) taken to fill the ranks of the Ottoman Janissary corps and the Safavids' elite *ghulams* (slave soldiers) are notable examples of the practice.[23] In north India, the first of the Delhi Sultanates was founded by a former military slave of Turkish origin known as a mamluk, and the mamluk system remained critically important to military recruitment until at least the fourteenth century.[24] Although largely abandoned in the Mughal north in the sixteenth century, military slavery persisted in the frontier environment of the south until its conquest and incorporation into the Mughal state in the seventeenth century.[25]

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[17] The matter of identities is one explored more fully by Kolff in *Naukar*, 71–199.

[18] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 163–64.

[19] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 189.

[20] See: Nath, 'Military Labour', who notes that the sources are silent on why such groups offered their skills and services to the Mughals.

[21] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii, 413–14.

[22] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 111, for citation. This, and Eaton's 'Military Slavery', are the source of many of the details in this paragraph.

[23] Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 52–55, 71–74. Veinstein, 'Ottoman Janissaries', offers an accessible introduction to the world of janissary service and its development. See, also: Goffman, *Ottoman Empire*, 27–97, for discussion of the janissary and *ghulam* slave systems in the early Ottoman Empire and the reaction of Europeans; Yaycioglu, 'Guarding Traditions', provides a sophisticated social history of the janissary class in the later empire period.

Until then, the demand for military slaves was met by men captured from Ethiopia (or Abyssinia, known by the Arabic term '*Habshi*') and brought to the Deccan via the Arabian Gulf. *Habshis* were preferred by Muslim and Christian enslavers and their collaborators because they saw indigenes as pagans, and thus felt morally free to enslave them. Most famous of all is Malik Ambar (1548–1626) (Fig. 6B). He was born in present-day Ethiopia in 1548 as Chapu (his birth name); either sold by his parents or taken as a war captive; then sold and resold in the slave markets of the Arab world before being brought to the Deccan. There, he entered a world where *Habshis* did not merely fulfill the demand for soldiers, for such men could also rise to positions of power: upon being freed, they might freelance as warriors so that a master-slave relationship was transformed to more of a patron-client one, some serving as paid troopers while others organised units of their own. Thus, Malik Ambar's master was a once-enslaved *Habshi* who was freed and climbed to the position of *peshwa* (chief minister) of Ahmadnagar. After being freed, Malik Ambar himself served the rulers of Ahmadnagar and (briefly) of Bijapur, rose through the military ranks from a freelancer to a commander and owner of his own military slaves, and became the regent and *peshwa* of the Ahmadnagar sultanate, marrying his daughter into the royal family.[26] He successfully repelled Mughal armies from the north and – more than the sultan himself – symbolised *the* major obstacle to early seventeenth-century Mughal expansion, earning the Mughals' ire (and grudging respect). In a grisly fantasy painted by a Mughal artist, Jahangir shoots an arrow at the dismembered head of his nemesis.[27]

The advent of Mughal rule in the north in the sixteenth century, and the empire's expansion southward later in the seventeenth century, was transformative. To be sure, a lively trade in slaves brought from central Asia continued, and use was made of enslaved people in numerous different roles in Rajput courts, throughout the Mughal realm, and in the later Maratha state, not least within elite households, despite a ban on enslaving the families of war captives (although not the captives themselves) in Akbar's time.[28]

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[24] Kumar, 'Military Slavery'; Roy, 'From the Mamluks to the Mansabdars'.

[25] See: Ali, *African Dispersal*, for a history of *Habshis* in the Deccan. Issues of race and of the long-term place of *Habshis* in Indian society are described by Eaton and examined even more fully in a special issue of *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 11, no. 4, 'Narrating Africa in South Asia' (2020).

[26] Ali, *Malik Ambar*, for an excellent biography with primary source excerpts. See, also: Eaton, 'Military Slavery'; Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 105–28.

[27] Moin, *Millennial*, 193–96, for analysis of this 'metaphorical' picture.

[28] Levi, 'Hindus Beyond the Hindu Kush'; Sreenivasan, 'Female Slaves'; Guha, 'Slavery'.

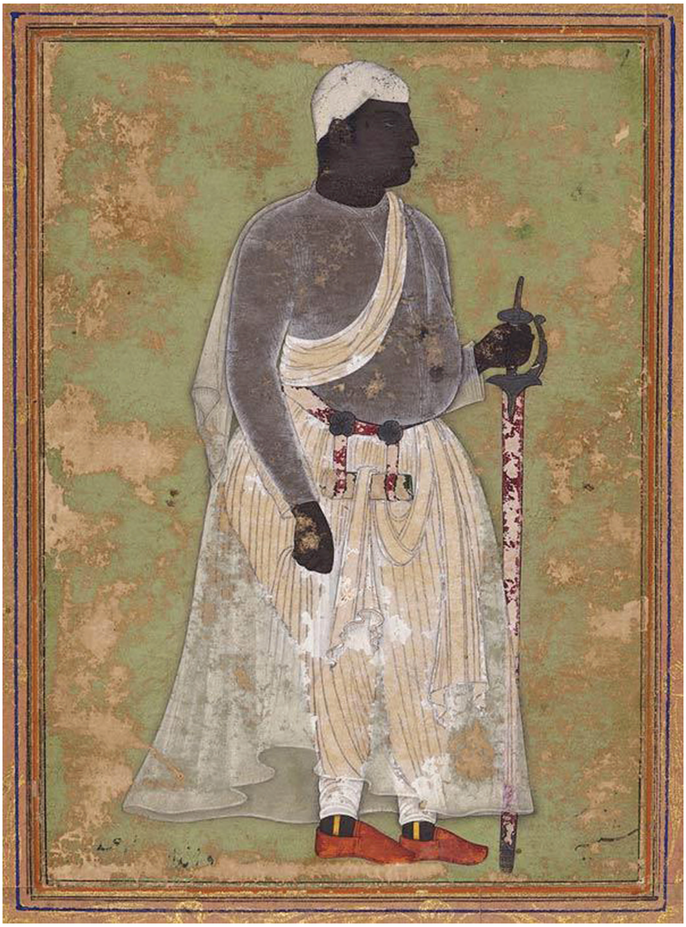

Fig. 6B Portrait of Malik Ambar (watercolour and gold; attributed to an Ahmednagar artist; early seventeenth century)

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The Mughals also captured rebels and authorised their sale in slave markets in central Asia, thereby contributing to the two-way traffic in enslaved persons. But military slaves were not part of the Mughal conquest, for Babur was accompanied by kinsmen and 'free' warriors from Iran and central Asia. Military slavery was undesirable from a tactical perspective, furthermore, for Mughal officers permitted to purchase enslaved people might form devotedly loyal bands of personal retainers as part of the build-up of their own power bases – power bases that could be used to launch a rebellion.[29] It persisted but was swamped by 'free' labour.[30] Of course, the market for military labour might have approximated a 'free market', but that does not necessarily entail free agency on the part of its participants. In a society defined by customary rights and obligations (e.g., between peasants and zamindars), and in a context where retainers were valued for their unswerving loyalty to their master, to say nothing of military corvée, there are good reasons to believe the rank-and-file had less freedom than their patrons.

6.1.3 Military Entrepreneurs, Local Elites, and Recruitment

Ultimately, the career of Himmat Bahadur and the trajectories of manumitted military slaves in the Delhi and Deccan sultanates throw two issues into relief. First, how important the open market was to the sale and purchase of the services of warriors and armed men by the sixteenth century, if not earlier, all the way through to the end of our period. In fact, the success of the Mughals and of Sher Shah, as much as their contemporaries who ruled Gujarat and Malwa, depended on transacting in these markets.[31] Second, how a ruler's military needs were not primarily met by the state's own battalions but by transacting with military entrepreneurs or jobbers (*jamadars*) and their warbands.[32] They often hailed from Turan, Iran, and Afghanistan and had little interest in possession of landed right, but some were successfully channelled into imperial service – for example, through offer of a *mansab* and *jagir* in the Mughal context (§7.1) – while others remained like the roving condottieri of early modern Europe.[33] In the Ottoman world, the janissary corps and the *timariots* and their *sipahis* (cavalrymen) were but a part of the combined military forces available to the sultan, of which the larger part remained diffuse and/or loosely controlled. In China, too, violence was a fact of everyday life in which, for example, 'local officials and ambitious bandit chiefs often competed for men of force from a common pool.'[34]

Another component were the zamindars, under whose sway were an estimated four million men or more. They were probably untrained and undisciplined yet, ultimately, constituted a staggeringly large pool of manpower.[35] Their close ties to the soil and local men meant they could inspire – or force – peasants into military service during the winter slack season for mutual – or personal – gain.[36] Their local authority meant they could just as well be lured by the promise of a *watan jagir* as reject the bestowal of this landed right – which they felt they already possessed – and the submission to Mughal authority that it entailed. A further corollary of their connection to the soil was that they may have been less inclined to fight in distant campaigns than help suppress local conflicts or else serve as local militias. Over time, moreover, a process of *zamindarisation* unfolded whereby *mansabdars* sought to 'trade their military assets for stakes in agrarian lordships, thus becoming *zamindari* landlords themselves'.[37]

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[29] Eaton, 'Introduction' [1], 11–12.

[30] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 83.

[31] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 21.

[32] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 67.

[33] Ibid, 68.

[34] Robinson, *Bandits*, 167. See, also: Moll-Murata and Theobald, 'Military Employment', especially 355–59 and 382–90.

[35] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 74.

The sheer scale and geographic scope of marketised and usually highly mobile military labour increased through the early modern period as the world – as well as the grounds of conflicts themselves – became more globalised. The picture was similar elsewhere. In mainland southeast Asia, for instance, Cham, Mon and Malay warriors, and adventurers and mercenaries from Iran, Japan, and the Iberian world – many of them skilled in the use of cutting-edge firearms and thus preferred to indigenous conscripts – made up the fighting power of Burmese and Siamese rulers, though local military training gradually helped displace such reliance on foreigners in time.[38] In Europe, men also left their localities to travel long distances to offer their services, sometimes under state sponsorship. The Scottish government, for instance, raised levies to fight in conflicts across northern Europe, which reached a peak amidst a backdrop of social and economic hardship at home, c. 1550–1650. There were, moreover, many unlicensed, unofficial, and hence unaccounted for levies raised by Scottish lairds to fight across Europe and as far as Russia or the Ottoman frontier.[39] By the eighteenth century, continental Europeans joined Scots and other Britons to cross the Atlantic and voyage back again to fight on both sides of the revolutionary wars.[40] These conflicts even spilled into the Indian Ocean world, so that European soldiers enlisted in standing armies – not to mention mercenaries and militias absorbed into armies, which remained important in this period – now fought on Asian soil alongside the European powers' regiments of local conscripts.[41] Much as Asians fought for the Europeans, so the reverse was also true. In fact, so many European soldiers had defected from the *Estado* or the East India companies into the ranks of the Mughal army, 'that a special district in Delhi was set aside for them called "Foreigners' town".'[42]

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[36] Note that peasants sometimes turned to plunder and looting if opportunities for military service were unavailable: Kolff, 'Peasants', 251.

[37] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 68–69, on this process, and 53, for a longer-standing and eventually related process of 'rajputisation', whereby there was a 'gradual transition of mobile, open, exogamous war-bands into settled, closed, endogamous castes who recognised little else than unilineal kinship.'

[38] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 165, 292.

[39] Miller, 'Scottish Mercenary'. The Highland 'clearances' of the eighteenth century stimulated another wave of 'military migration' or mercenary service: Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War*, especially 177–91; Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier*, 19–32. The market for mercenaries was highly international before c. 1650; the protracted nature of campaigning changed this for a time thereafter: Parrott, *Business of War*, 71–100.

[40] Mackillop, *More Fruitful than the Soil*; Dziennik, *Fatal Land*. See, also: Conway, *Britannia's Auxiliaries*.

The marketisation of military labour, and of the resources for making political violence at large, probably intensified through the early modern period in north India, and likely also the south.[43] Although Akbar had tried to subdue the violent power of refractory zamindars, the Mughals nevertheless relied on clan leaders and chiefs with close links to local pools of men to broker and recruit peasant soldiers, receiving in return for their loyalty a share of the spoils and an official rank in the Mughal state system, thus becoming Mughal servicemen (*mansabdars*).[44] The ascendance of the Bundela leader and favourite of Jahangir, Raja Bir Singh Deo (d. 1627), is an outstanding example of the possibilities open to a talented military entrepreneur. By successfully placing infantry units at the emperor's disposal, he was able to channel the empire's financial and other resources towards himself in return.[45]

From the sixteenth century, as new artillery technologies steadily diffused and became more available, so more and more peasants armed themselves with handguns via intermediaries like Bir Singh Deo, entered imperial *naukari* (service), and carried the flame of peasant soldiering traditions known by such names as Purbiya, Tomar, Ujjainiya, Bundela, and Baksariya. From the late seventeenth century, well-armed peasants became a greater problem for the imperial centre, while at the same time the latter's territorial reach and its grip over society started to weaken. The collapse of the Mughal state system meant the role played by *mansabdars* in recruitment shifted to numerous independently operating *jamadars* with 'strong local links and great freedom of negotiating their terms of service', often working for any one of a range of patrons.[46] In the southern sultanates, the control of military manpower was comparatively tilted toward regional grandees, rather than the sultans, many of whom thus tried to emulate Mughal-style centralisation in the decades preceding the Mughal conquest of the Deccan. It is a matter of speculation whether and to what extent recruitment reverted in the post-Mughal period.[47] Here we find parallel with the transformation of the Ottoman military after 1650.[48] The empire's steady decentralisation empowered local potentates, who became military contractors, and whose private armies sometimes joined mercenary forces and state troops to put down local rebellion or fight in Ottoman wars.[49]

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[41] Sikora, 'Change and Continuity', carefully outlines why, where, and how mercenaries and militias persisted into the mid-eighteenth century in central Europe.

[42] Hunt, 'Mughal Siege', 156, 165.

[43] Kolff, 'Peasant', 248. See, also: Kumar, '*Bandagi* and *Naukari*', on the evolution of military service cultures across the late medieval to early modern periods.

[44] Kolff, 'Peasant', 248, 261. For the pre-Mughal history of peasant military service and certain peasant warrior orders: *op. cit.*, 254–59.

[45] Ibid, citations 259, and 259–61 for a survey of Bir Singh's life.

[46] Ibid, 248. See, also: Kolff, 'Mobile Labour'.

[47] Dayal, ' "Mughal" Soldier', especially 875–78.

[48] Aksan, 'Mobilization', especially 337–50.

6.1.4 Warrior Ascetics

Aside from *jamadars* and their warbands or zamindars and peasants, Indian rulers could make use of the services of leaders possessing spiritual authority. The *shaikhzadas* were Indian-born descendants of Sufi saints who, before settling, had amassed a widespread and devoted following by roving as dervishes. Since they commanded extensive networks of disciples, they were perfectly placed to launch a career as a military entrepreneur, as evinced by the lives of Saiyid Abul Fath and Rashid Khan Ansari, leaders of the Mahdawi and Rowshaniya sects, respectively.[50] *Shaikhzadas* thus became an important part of the Mughal imperial service elite.[51] A number of historians have also brought to light the importance of Hindu (and Sikh) warrior ascetics. Some were yogis, for yoga was a practice aiming toward unleashing power (§2.3); colonial sources often call them *fakirs* or *sannyasis*. Some were *gosains* (in the Gangetic valley), *bairagi*s (toward the west), or were known as *nagas*.[52] The man known in later life by the *nom de guerre* Himmat Bahadur – which was bestowed by the Nawab of Awadh in return for his valorous service – was also known as Anupgiri Gosain, and many of his men were fellow *gosains*.[53] The existence of these warrior ascetics was of long standing but they became prominent from the fifteenth century, with their heyday in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Ceasing to be a significant military and political presence following the colonial transition, they nonetheless remained a source of political agitation – protesting cow slaughter legislation in the 1960s, for example – down to the modern day.[54]

Rather than selling their labour on the market in the first instance, militarised groups like the Dadupanthi *nagas*, certain Vaishnava *bairagis*, and the early Sikh Khalsa formed with the intention of fighting particular opponents and perceived injustices, such as confiscation of wealth and tax-free lands from the monasteries or institutions of particular (faith) communities.[55] The spread of Muslim rule in north India may or may not have increased the occurrence of confiscations: the evidence is hazy, and a number of Muslim rulers sought to protect the rights of non-believers, while some conflicts continued to be between Hindu communities. The perception of injustice and conflict may have been sufficient to prompt militarised religious bodies into being, nonetheless.[56]

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[49] Khoury, 'Ottoman Centre', 145–48.

[50] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 72.

[51] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 21.

[52] Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics*, 6.

[53] Ibid, 5.

[54] Lorenzen, 'Warrior Ascetics', 61.

[55] Ibid, 63, 69–70.

[56] Ibid, 68–69. *C.f.* Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics*, 7.

Ultimately, the service of Himmat Bahadur/Anupgiri Gosain to Muslim, Hindu, and Christian paymasters was far from unusual, and thus stands as a reminder that the *gosains*' beliefs ought not be misunderstood as monolithic and neatly and narrowly bounded ('Hindu') and hence necessarily in antagonism with the beliefs of Muslim kings any more than they were at odds with other Hindus of different and diverse beliefs.[57]

The military economy engendered by Mughal rule created tremendous opportunities for the expansion of warrior asceticism, for yogis found ready patrons in the commanders of Mughal armies.[58] To this can be added a push factor: the frequency of hunger due to environmental fluctuations, worsened when rulers squeezed their subjects for more tax revenues, during what we now call the latter phase of the early modern Little Ice Age, for this encouraged boys and men to join the groups of yogis bonded by discipleship and offering sustenance.[59] In terms of numbers and tactics, small groups of yogis skilled in guerrilla-style fighting transformed into large warbands made up of cavalrymen and infantrymen, although hand-to-hand combat did not disappear entirely. Himmat Bahadur, for instance, commanded more than 20,000 men in the late eighteenth century.[60]

Being highly mobile, some of these warrior ascetics combined armed service and trade, not least those *sannyasis* or *gosains* who were numerous throughout 'the country lying south of the hills of Tibbet from Cabul to China', as noted by Warren Hastings, governor general of the East India Company (1772–85).[61] Occasionally roving around India on pilgrimages armed with swords and matchlocks, or conducting trans-Himalayan trade in valuable commodities (diamonds, coral, gold dust, musk, pearls, cloth), some settled in monasteries or hermitages, others in towns as traders or moneylenders, and others still employed by landlords to defend the latter's *zamindaris* or to extort money and as soldiers, with many switching between such occupations.[62] If Mughal expansion was connected to one phase of their evolution, so the breakdown of Mughal rule led naturally to further growth. Indeed, the particular prominence of warrior ascetics and their leaders in eighteenth century Punjab, Rajasthan, Bengal, and the Maratha territories is hardly surprising. The opportunities for leaders like Himmat Bahadur for advancement and reward grew tremendously in the wake of Mughal decentralisation and decline.[63]

[57] And vice versa, since Jahangir, for example, was said to be a devotee of one Jadrup Gosain: Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics*, 22 and n.38. Akbar, of course, took great interest in India's diverse religious diverse communities, including yogis: *op. cit.*, 28–58. On the horror of Ahmad Shah's soldiers upon seeing naked *gosains* in amongst the Muslim lines of the Afghans' allies at Panipat in 1761: Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 57 and n. 42.

[58] Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics*, especially 59–103.

[59] Ibid, 80–81.

[60] Ibid, 70–80.

[61] Quoted in: Kolff, 'Sannyasi', 214.

[62] Kolff, 'Sannyasi', 214–15, 217; Cohn, 'Gosains'.

[63] Lorenzen, 'Warrior Ascetics', 68.

6.2 The Ecology of Violence

6.2.1 Afro-Eurasia's Arid and Wet Zones

What obstacles thwarted the state's monopoly on violence? Or, to put it differently, why were there so many diffuse and often highly mobile pools of men ready to make violence? One key factor was ecology. Jos Gommans foregrounds and develops the environmental currents of Ibn Khaldun's analysis, mapping the idea of political cycles born of the dualism of two distinct yet interdependent spaces onto his formulation of the arid and wet zones. The arid zone stretches from the parched southeast of the Iberian Peninsula across north Africa and Arabia, from the fringes of Poland across the steppes and deserts of central Asia to Mongolia, and southward through the Afghan highlands to the Deccan Plateau (Map 6A). The degree of aridity varies but, essentially, this is a space of relatively low agricultural fertility, limited urbanisation, and low population density, the lifestyles of its inhabitants being nomadic or semi-nomadic. By contrast, the surrounding area is fertile and lush, with vast river basins that are the source of agricultural fertility and fecundity, dense populations with a tendency toward agglomeration in towns and cities, and centralised states. Straddling the dry and wet zones, while also serving as a transitory region between the larger arid zone of central Eurasia and the subtropical region of monsoon Asia, Gommans argues, the Indian subcontinent is fairly unique, these facts also explaining patterns of political change and the character of Indian states.[64]

The arid zone of south Asia extends from present-day Afghanistan into the Thar Desert and over the hills, plateaus, and grasslands of low fertility and low rainfall in western and central India, such as Bundelkhand, the Malwa Plateau, and the Deccan Plateau. This space graduates to the more moist and fertile land of the east, and several rivers – the Krishna, Kaveri, and Godaveri – cut through parts of the arid zone on their eastward course to the Indian Ocean. There is no hard boundary between the arid and wet zones, which instead are knitted into one another at what Gommans calls the 'inner frontier'. Indeed, the notion of a dualism between two heuristic zones should not obscure the deep integration of the two worlds and the back and forth interchange between them: the use made by pastoralists of town and village markets and the reliance of cultivators on the use of pastoralists' herds for ploughing; the periodic settling down of pastoralists from the mobile world of the dry zone, or the geographic and occupational mobility of inhabitants of the sedentary world of the wet zone; and the granting of cultivable land to military entrepreneurs and their men – in return for military service – that needed to be farmed.[65]

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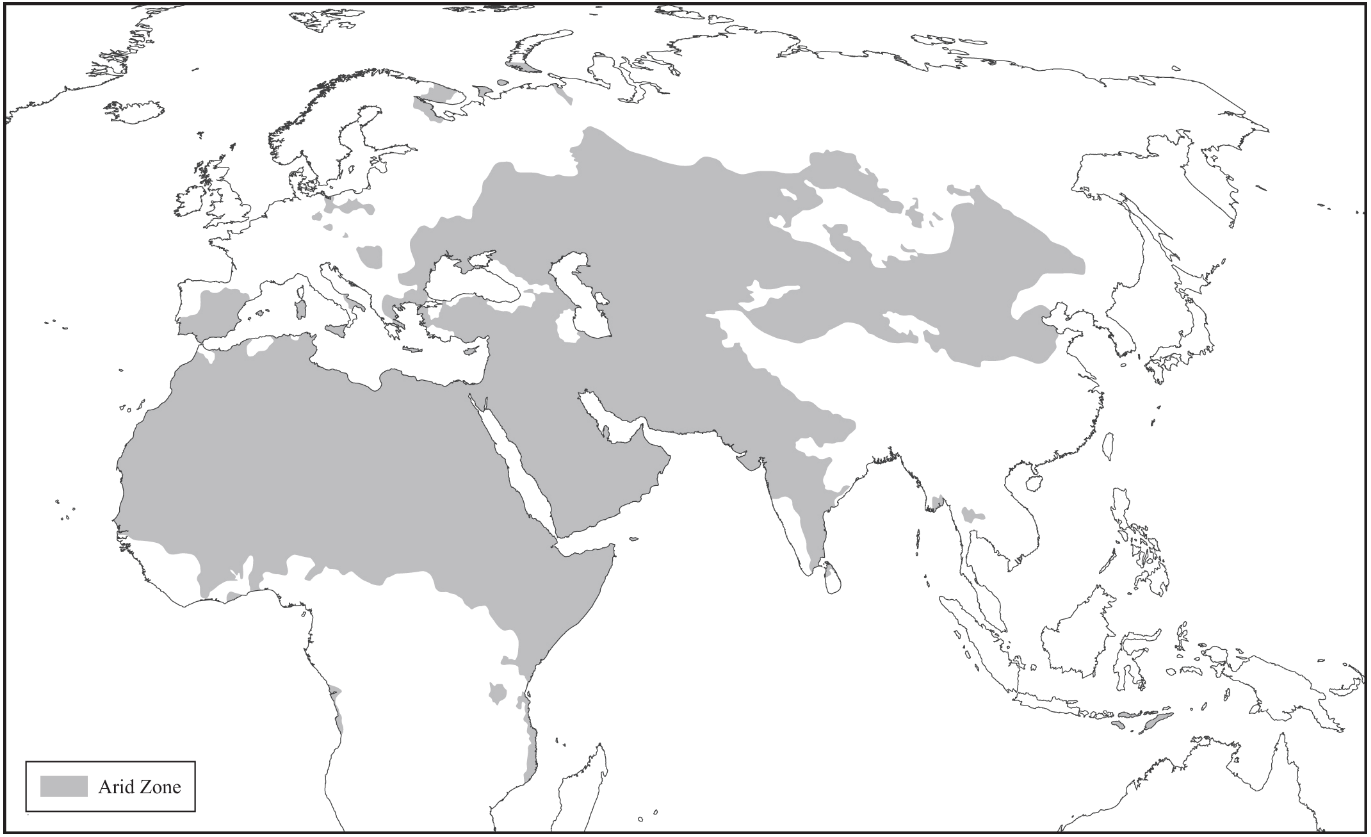
[64] Gommans, 'Silent Frontier', 4–10; Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 8–10. See, also: Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 6–10.

[65] Kolff, 'Peasants', 243, and *passim*.



Map 6A Afro-Eurasia's Arid Zone

One significance of making this distinction, nevertheless, is that it helps us to see that durable or successful imperial capitals were often located on the inner frontier, this space 'between (semi-)nomadic wilderness and sedentary centres.'[66] Delhi is a classic example, but others include Bijapur, Golkonda, and Vijayanagara. Rather than being static, the inner frontier was invigorated from about the twelfth century by 'the increased input of stronger warhorses, dromedaries, and cattle, all of which tremendously enhanced the existing capacity for warfare, trade, and land reclamation.'[67] Thus, Gommans notes, the 'dilemma for the Delhi rulers was both a classic Islamic and Indic one: although their rule belonged to the settled order of sedentary society, their actual power derived from the arid wastes.'[68]

Substituting the dualism of rural and urban civilisation posited by Ibn Khaldun for the dualism of Afro-Eurasia's arid and wet zones (and the inner frontier betwixt) offers a more nuanced framework for the study of hard power and political violence in south Asia.[69] The inhabitants of the arid zone frequently enjoyed the material productions and riches of the subcontinent's sedentary societies, either through trade or raid and plunder. Their drive to sequester the wealth of sedentary states might eventually give way to the desire to establish political authority via conquest. Initially, tribesmen-turned-dynastic rulers might effectively harness the resources of the arid zone in furtherance of state building in the fertile lands beyond, and channel wealth from the latter toward their kinsmen and allies in the former. Over time, however, these dynasts became too accustomed to the trappings of a settled life, and too remote from pastoral society, to maintain the unity of tribal power or to effectively channel tribal resources into their ambit. Invoking the frames of Ibn Khaldun's theory, the result was a 'degeneration' that led to the decline of these states, and within it an opportunity ripe for plucking – the opportunity for a new grand alliance of tribesmen under a new leader to harvest the fruit of the world of the sown, and thereby begin the cycle anew.

6.2.2 Pastoralists and Militaries

The notion of arid and wet zones, and the successful exploitation of their respective advantages, helps explain other features of violent power in south Asia. In the first place, the environmental divide underwrote differences in agrarian regimes and, ultimately, in settlement versus pastoralism that profoundly shaped military organisation. Food insecurity in the arid zone was a push to participation in seasonal military labour markets.[70] Fortune smiled on the inhabitants of the arid zone in other ways, however. The opportunity cost of fodder production in the wet zone was too high – because of the sacrifice of cash crops – and the environment ill-suited to raising large herds of horses, bullocks, dromedaries, or other quadrupeds. The opposite was true in the dry zone, where the constant search for fresh pasturage incentivised pastoralism over settlement, while the seasonal migration between the arid and wet zones to graze herds and to sell animal products (dairy, fats, hides, meat) coincided neatly with the winter campaign season, creating an opportunity to offer military labour and the hire or sale of the pastoralists' animal power.[71]

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[66] Gommans, *Indian Frontier*, 19–21, and citation on 20.

[67] Ibid, 77.

[68] Ibid, 77.

[69] Ibid, 51–77. Wink, Post-Nomadic Empires', examines Ibn Khaldun's 'environmental determinism', comparing it to the earlier theory posited by Herodotus.

[70] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 11–12.

But who were these pastoralists? The semi-arid expanse in south India was long home to people who made a living by swidden agriculture, herding, and trade, with the precarity of life on the upland slopes precipitating a tendency toward the 'development of martial skills and the emergence of warlords.'[72] This tendency was bolstered by the spread of new technologies like stirrups, saddles, and harnesses, which enhanced the efficacy of cavalry warfare, fuelling the intensification of militarism in late medieval south India – the crucible from which the Sangama brothers rose to power to establish the Vijayanagara Empire.[73] On the western side of the Indian peninsula, the Marathas originated as a loose, open-status peasant-warrior grouping, probably pastoralists before some of the most important clans (e.g., the Bhonsles) acquired prebends through service to the Deccan sultans, probably in the seventeenth century, a mere generation or two before Shivaji was born.[74] And in the northwest, the dry zone extended over the Rajput states, where a distinct tradition of military service had come into being by the early modern period, and deep into present-day Afghanistan, Iran, and central Asia.

Known as Pathans, Pashtuns, or Powindas, these mobile groups from Afghanistan were critically important to the production of hard power across the Indian subcontinent, not only in the cradle of empires in Hindustan. The precarity of the Pashtuns' homeland from the point of view of settled agriculture had long ago spurred into being an economy in which well-armed tribes (*ulus*) protected their scarce resources, sometimes turning to reiving because their livelihoods depended on the possession of large herds; indeed, they can hardly be called primitive, for their economy required considerable capitalisation.[75] The Powindas were the migratory Pashtun tribes. They spent the summer months from April to September in the north of their migratory circuit, either on pasturage in the Afghan highlands or even as far north as the oases states of central Eurasia, such as Bukhara. Then, once these places were bitten by the winter cold, and once the summer on the north Indian plain had passed, they descended onto the pastures of Punjab and Hindustan, some fanning as far south as the Deccan or as far east as Bengal, where they spent the period from October to March.[76] Much like the *gosains*, marriage alliances struck with charismatic and important religious (i.e., Sufi) leaders unlocked the resources of these religious networks while also allowing Afghans to pass more easily through hostile territory, this process beginning in the fifteenth century, if not earlier.[77]

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[71] For discussion of the role of animals in Mughal warfare more generally, see: Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 131–48 and notes for references to the classic work of Simon Digby and to that of Jos Gommans in the latter's *Indo-Afghan*.

[72] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 69.

[73] Ibid, 69–70.

[74] Kolff, 'Peasants'; Gordon, *Marathas*, 41–58.

[75] Lally, 'Landscape'. On the latter point, see: Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 15 and n. 8.

Their arrival in north India thus coincided with the campaign season, when the rains had passed and when slack labour during the cooler months could be enjoined into military service to Indian potentates. Afghans sought a share of the spoils of campaigns but sometimes – under the spell of a charismatic leader – sought the trappings of sedentary society. As mercenaries and owners of livestock, Afghans and their leaders held a power that was something of a double-edged sword from the perspective of rulers of India's sedentary states. On the one hand, the subduing and successful control of their restive energies supported expansionism and pacification campaigns.[78] On the other hand, such resources could as easily be employed by rivals or by the Afghans themselves. Several 'Indian' dynasties were of Afghan descent, their origins laying in control of the horse trade, Gommans reminds us, namely the Ghurids (879–1215) and Lodis (1451–1526), as well as the short-lived Sur dynasty that ruled during the Mughal interregnum (1540–56).[79] The rise of the Durrani state was not the accidental consequence of some chaotic 'tribal breakout' (§1.3.3; §7.4), but consequent to Ahmad Shah's mobilisation of the resources and representatives of arid and wet zone society.

6.2.3 Climate, Environment, and Military Strategy

The distinction of the arid from wet zones is not merely a heuristic device contrived by modern historians. It found expression in Indian sources as an Ayurvedic divide between the phlegmatic ailments of inhabitants in the east, where malaria was endemic, and the bilious temperament of those in the west, where malaria was epidemic.[80] Climate mattered in other ways, too, altering the ease or difficulty faced by those thousands of ordinary labourers who made campaigning possible, whether by transporting and erecting the military encampment, providing carriage services, building bridges and other structures, and helping to provision the army.[81] Climatic difference also made certain landscapes alien and uncomfortable to invading armies and their leaders, necessitating collaboration with local intermediaries and powerholders, without whom campaigns were seldom successful.

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[76] Lally, *Silk Roads*, 73–124.

[77] Green, 'Blessed Men'.

[78] For analysis of this problematic into the colonial period, see: Lally, 'Landscape'.

[79] Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 104–43.

[80] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 13.

[81] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 148–64. Reflexively, military manpower was – and still is – deployed for such purposes as construction of infrastructure or the provision of emergency relief, as lately brought to attention by a new wave of labour/military histories: Zürcher, 'Introduction', especially 11–12, 18–19.

Such collaborators occasionally misjudged the capabilities and ambitions of pastoralists, nomads, and their leaders. Take, as an example, the Ming generals who opened the gates of the Great Wall for the Manchu-Qing forces, mistakenly thinking the latter would be content to help put down the disorder and reassert Ming control in return for the rewards of plunder. They gravely underestimated the grander and sophisticated ambitions of those they viewed as mere nomads or 'barbarians'.[82] Ahmad Shah Durrani's first solo campaign into north India was likewise encouraged by collaborators busy pursuing their own political objectives: in the midst of a bitter family feud, one of the rival claimants to the Mughal governorship of Punjab offered Ahmad Shah the post of *wazir* (prime minister) in exchange for helping return order to Punjab, before turning his back on the Durrani ruler, and thus being held to ransom in 1747 when the Afghan forces invaded nonetheless.[83] More broadly, collaboration was not only a means of accessing a military leader's manpower, but also their knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of local climate and landscape, and the resources suited to these environments that they put at the invading army's disposal. Mughal expansion vitally depended upon such men, as Pratyay Nath reveals in work that moves beyond the framework of the arid and wet zones.

That the Mughals harnessed the resources of the arid zone to conquer the north Indian plain (Hindustan) is not in doubt. The particular technologies of which they made use are described below, save to say that the flat open spaces of Hindustan were well suited to fighting pitched battles featuring 'mounted archery, heavy cavalry, matchlock-bearing infantry, and field artillery', not least at Panipat in 1526 and again in 1556.[84] Thereafter, imperial expansion entailed movement into a landscape broken up by dense forest or shrub and populated with defensive forts, so that sieges became more common. Then, as the imperial army moved outward yet further, they encountered even more unfamiliar landscapes. The amphibious environments of the Bengal delta and the Indus basin, the thickly forested tropical uplands of Assam, and the uplands of the Hindu Kush and the Himalaya each necessitated the adoption of particular military technologies and tactics suited to the terrain and climate.[85] Nath shows that Mughal success was often the fruit of alliances, especially with local powerholders. In Bengal, for example, the Mughal commander Raja Man Singh forged an association with Bhabananda Majundar

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[82] Brook, *Great State*, 121–25.

[83] Lally, 'Beyond "Tribal Breakout"', 378.

[84] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 32 for citation.

[85] The attention paid by Nath to early modern Bengal's riparian landscape and its agency within imperial politics and governance is complemented by some excellent recent work by (environmental) historians of the early colonial period, for example: Mukherjee, 'Impermanent Settlement'; D'Souza, 'Mischievous Rivers'. See, also: Roy, 'Where is Bengal?'.

(Mazumdar), who prayed to the local goddess Annapurna to part the storm clouds. Recorded in a later Bengali literary text, this episode – whether fictive or not – nevertheless illuminates the difficulties posed by the heavy monsoon rain, the tangle of tributaries and rivers, and the occurrence of floods that the Mughals struggled against, not to mention the assistance they necessarily sought from local potentates. It was through such alliances that the Mughals acquired the river boats they needed in combat.[86] In contrast, where alliances could not be built, the Mughals faced opponents in possession of similar gunpowder technologies yet with vastly superior knowledge and control of the local environment, putting the Mughals at a grave disadvantage; this was the case in Assam during the campaigns fought in the first half of the seventeenth century, for example. The enticing of such collaborators forces us to reckon with how violent conflict was justified and how participants were rewarded, which are the subjects of the next section.[87]

6.3 Cultures of Violence

The pursuit of spiritual merit meant military service was possibly its own reward for the members of militarised monastic orders, while the conscious crafting of soldierly identities by *jamadars* helped to entice the *jawan* (youth) in search of a brotherhood and a purpose into military service.[88] Yet, we should not overlook the draw of material rewards, which came in the form of cash/ tribute and possibly also a share in the spoils of conflict – what is sometimes described as plunder, loot, or prize.[89] Generally, skilled combatants were paid off (in arrears) whereas higher-ranking commanders-cum-collaborators and noblemen were rewarded for their valorous service not only with cash but through incorporation into the state (§7.1.2).[90] The bestowal of office was marked by ceremonies of incorporation, so that a culture of honourable service – especially as a chivalric cavalryman – replete with its own symbols, rituals, and rewards had come into being by early modern times.[91] The centrepiece of such ceremonies was the bestowal of a *khilat*, a collective term for the

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[86] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 60–67. See, also: Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 137–58.

[87] To put the issue differently, one might ask '*why* conquer?', as Zoltán Biedermann has posed in an intricate and important analysis of the relationship between imperial Portugal and Lankan rulers, which culminated – only after several decades of diplomatic dialogue – in a shift toward Portuguese territorial conquest and Portuguese control of parts of the island from 1597: *(Dis)Connected Empires*. Flatt, in *Living Well*, 263–302, looks at culture and violence differently, focusing on military training as part of the ethical education of Deccani courtly elites.

[88] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 48–50. See: Sohoni, 'Fortified Strongholds', 112, for an excellent description of the 'ritual' nature of Indian warfare, in which weight was placed on baring one's teeth by presenting maximum force and then bargaining for a settlement over actual combat.

[89] Kolff, *Naukar*, 43–53. See, also: Finn, 'Material Turns', on the categories 'loot' and 'prize'.

[90] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 16, 21, for examples from Akbar's reign that prefigured and possibly inspired the *mansabdari* system into being.

[91] Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 161–81, on the Mughal 'culture of chivalry'.

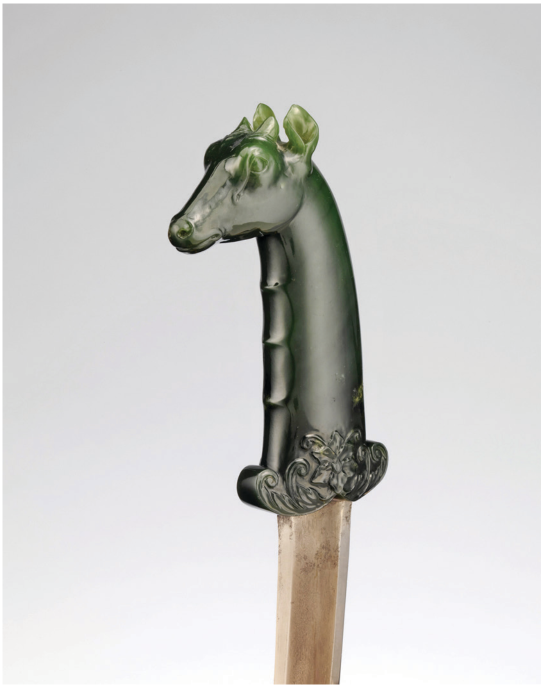

Fig. 6C Dagger with a Hilt in the Form of a Nilgai (nephrite and steel; north India; c. 1640)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1985.58a, b

various articles of investiture. Originally, it referred to the robe taken off the back of the ruler and presented to the recipient as a mark of honour and to bond together the two men. Over time, it became increasingly elaborate, with Mughal *khilat* comprised of several distinct items (turbans, sashes, shawls, overcoats, and so forth). The dagger with a beautiful hilt fashioned from nephrite/jade in the form of a nilgai (blue bull) pictured in Fig. 6C may have been tucked into a sash tied around a courtier's waist and may even have been a gift or *khilat*. Such ritual investiture was a Mughal variant of a practice of long standing, already extant in the Delhi Sultanate, but also widespread across Eurasia.[92]

By incorporating military brokers and men with impressive martial skills into the state, India's rulers at once pacified the *ghazi* and civilised him into the mould of the courtly *mirza*, a princely or gentlemanly figure.[93] To succeed, Indian rulers had to do more than invest rough brutes with fine robes. They also had to create shared norms and affects (e.g., feelings of love, a sense of shame), as the Mughals did early on to bond the conquering elite before it quickly dispersed across Hindustan, thereby lending a little cohesion to the nascent body politic.[94] Next, Akbar began to embody the ideal of elite manliness found in Indo-Persian works of *akhlaq*; in effect, he became an exemplary figure for his nobles to emulate. Such was the movement of elite masculinity in this direction by the late seventeenth century, that nobles/*mirzas* were lampooned in seventeenth-century literature as fussy and full of graces. Satire aside, the relationship of contemporary masculine norms to the imperatives of imperial service may well have become strained, even if not quite tantamount to a degeneration of the *mansabdars* into an effete class of dandies.[95]

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[92] See: Gordon, ed., *Khil'at*, especially the introduction by Stewart Gordon. See, also: Cohn, *Colonialism*, 114–15, 117–21.

Here we find parallels not only with Ibn Khaldun's cyclical theory, but also with Norbert Elias' famous 'civilising process'.[96] However, much as Elias' thesis has been critiqued since its presentation in 1969, so we can find reasons to doubt the extent to which India's rulers turned a warrior class into a nobility and dismiss the view that they consequently divorced themselves from the mobile world of the arid zone and its military resources.[97] In the first place, and for all the *mansabdars'* might, power was never so highly concentrated in a single class arranged around the throne, as the present and proceeding chapters show. From France to China, secondly, courtiers continued to dip into the markets for violence to make use of the services of violent men; India was no different, as we have seen.[98] And, finally, fresh insights into the history of emotions reveal that even the Mughal emperor was capable of extraordinary and uncontrollable anger, whose image as calm and just is largely a fabrication of litterateurs who consciously elided his outbursts from the record, such passion being unbecoming in a king, after all.[99]

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[93] Alternately, the king could be conceived as a warrior *and* a poet, as in the text composed outside the Indo-Muslim sphere proper by one of Vijaynagara's sixteenth-century rulers, thus paralleling but also modifying the *ghazi-mirza* alterity; see, for discussion of this text: Narayana Rao *et al*, 'New Imperial Idiom'.

[94] The project was not a complete success, but its significance is compelling; see: Anooshahr, 'Emotional Communities'.

[95] O'Hanlon, 'Manliness'.

[96] For application of Elias' thesis to the Mughal context, which is the basis of much of the present discussion, see: Gommans, 'Embarrassment'.

[97] Thomas, *Pursuit of Civility*, 21. See, also: Hasan, 'Law', 410–11, for a summary of the critique of Elias' ideas by Europeanists, and attempt at applying them to south Asia, nonetheless; Anooshahr, 'Emotional Communities', 5–6.

[98] See, for instance: Carroll, *Blood and Violence*; Robinson, *Bandits*. Carroll, 'Thinking with Violence', 30–31, notes the problems of validating Elias' thesis.

[99] If we know about such anger, it is because multiple affective communities existed in early modern India, some holding anger in different regard and/or willing to portray kings as angry and unjust, all of which is invaluably being brought to light by Cynthia Talbot in, e.g., 'Anger and Atonement'.

6.3.1 Jihad

Penned in the later sixteenth century and dedicated to the Bijapur sultan, Zainuddin al-Ma'bari's famous *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin fi ba'd Akhbar al-Purtukalin* ('Gift of the Holy Warriors in Respect of the Deeds of the Portuguese') speaks of jihad for the defence of Muslim states, their subjects, and their livelihoods from outsiders. In this case, those outsiders were the Portuguese, whose sighting of mosques riled up their religious animosity. Islam was a religion they recognised from Iberia and saw as an enemy. Portuguese efforts to monopolise the spice trade (§5.3.2) led to violence against Muslim peoples around the Indian Ocean, or else was detrimental to such groups as the Mappilas in the pepper-producing regions of Malabar.[100] Besides helping to fortify the faithful against such threats, jihad could also be invoked on the offensive – that is, upon the initiation of war and conflict to help rally the ruling class, recruit men of arms, and license political violence.[101]

Jihad has often been conceived as a crusade or 'holy war' led by a faithful *ghazi* – commonly translated as a 'holy warrior', but more accurately as a warrior-raider.[102] Jihad, so conceived, has long been used to explain the expansion of Muslim states. Where does this interpretation of jihad come from? As the first Muslim dynasties sought an ideology to justify and legitimate conquest, so Muslim jurists were induced 'to define jihad as armed struggle and to divorce law from ethics.'[103] According to Ayesha Jalal, modern scholarship has tended to focus on these legal treatises at the expense of other writings – whether by Muslim laymen or learned Sufis, often in the form of works of *ahklaq* – about jihad as an ethical struggle, thereby bolstering the notion of jihad as holy war.[104]

There were many reasons for a leader proclaiming himself a *ghazi* and engaging in *ghaza* or *ghazw* (raiding, campaigning), however, ranging from propagating Islam to providing loot and livelihood for his followers. Traceable to the Prophet's lifetime, the notion of a *ghazi* king was not only of long-standing but also sufficiently well-developed by early modern times, with a variety of historical role models available to a conqueror like Babur, founder of Mughal rule in India.[105] Analysing the Mughal dynast's *ghazi* identity, Ali Anooshahr has shifted the focus from other-directed reasons for proclaiming jihad and calling oneself a *ghazi* (i.e., religious conversion, quest for resources), to matters of self-fashioning. Babur drew inspiration from Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 998–1030), who had conquered and extended Ghaznavid rule to India, and who was portrayed as a *ghazi* king in a widely influential text that Babur read and engaged with.[106] By speaking of himself as a *ghazi* king like Mahmud, enacting this identity by tracing his predecessor's footsteps, and ensuring this image was committed to posterity, Babur fashioned a very particular image of his kingship that appealed to his contemporaries on the subcontinent and held a valence as far afield as the Ottoman world (§8.1).[107]

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[100] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 138–57, 222, for valuable analysis of the text and its context.

[101] Jalal, *Partisans*, 4.

[102] Cook, 'Ghazw'.

[103] Jalal, *Partisans*, 9.

[104] Ibid, 20–57, and *passim*.

[105] Anooshahr, *Ghazi Sultans*, 58–73.

[106] Ibid, especially 15–37, 118–64.

Aurangzeb declared his war against the Marathas a jihad in 1699, but how ought jihad be understood in this case?[108] Let us examine the *Fatawa-i Alamgiri* commissioned by Aurangzeb and compiled in Arabic by around forty scholars of the Hanafi school of legal thought between 1664 and 1672.[109] One way of reading its *Kitab al-Siyar*, as Jalal does, is as a document that 'provides many useful insights into legal opinions' not so much to do with jihad as an ethical battle but as an armed struggle; the text provides specific guidelines on such matters as how spoils can permissibly be divided, how defeated enemies should be treated, and how Muslim soldiers ought to behave.[110] Alternately, one might read the work the other way around: not only as a collection of legal opinions provided by Islamic jurists to a temporal ruler, but as the emperor's patronage of learned men and knowledge production as part of the self-conscious fabrication of Aurangzeb's kingship and kingly image.

As Alan M. Guenther argues, the text is part and parcel of a much larger project – namely, the emperor's open performance of his piety and his use of Islamic symbols to legitimise his power and at once also persuade critics that his claim to the throne was superior to the claim of his brother, Dara Shukoh.[111] By commissioning the *Fatawa-i Alamgiri*, the emperor demonstrated his commitment to Islam via the promotion of the *sharia* and its expert practitioners. But this did not mean he ceded all power to the Hanafi *ulama*, for by selecting and funding the scholars involved, he was able to direct those opinions compiled into a text intended to be a definitive work of Hanafi *fiqh*, to the extent that the *Fatawa-i Alamgiri* is thoroughly imprinted with his priorities.[112] Focusing narrowly on 'theories' of jihad and not looking into legal works risks overlooking these manifold and very real ways in which jihad was alloyed to the expression of universal sovereignty, the exercise of kingly duty, the deliverance of justice, and thus the protection of the *populi* (including, but not limited to, the faithful).

A king might offer supplication in the form of a prayer before battle, be it silent or more public, centring on repentance or piety or even willing martyrdom; on the haughtiness, errors, or aberrations of opponents; and on the latter's trickery, treachery, or even infidelity. As such, we only know of such prayers and what they encompassed from whatever may have been subsequently written down by the emperor, those around him, or even his opponents – each of whom had reasons to present the prayers differently, *post hoc*.[113] Violence was not only justified ante-bellum, moreover, for post-war proclamations of victory as well as biographical and historical works also broached the motivations for war or armed conflict, or else consciously deployed the notion of jihad in ways that were expedient. An example of this second sense of jihad as part of political rhetoric comes from early in Akbar's reign, when he faced the need to make violence against his Rajput opponents – chiefly, the kingdom of Mewar. Upon successfully besieging the fort at Chitor in 1568, the emperor issued a *fathnama* ('proclamation of victory') declaring 'the victory of Islam over infidels.'[114] Its text largely followed established precedent by issuing praise for Allah and the Prophet, describing conquest as necessary to bring righteous order, explaining how the wrongdoers were subdued, and closing by requesting subjects pray for the divinely favoured king. Quotation from the Quran was used to justify or offer precedent for such actions as the seizure of booty, but well-known Persian verse was employed for this purpose, too, and this was not strictly an 'Islamic' source.[115] All but the Kacchwaha Rajputs joined Mughal service *after* this episode, so the impact of Akbar's largely formulaic pronouncements might have been rather limited beyond rallying his Persian, Turani, and Indian Muslim contingents. Akbar followed his conquest with such measures as reintroducing the *jizya* (the poll tax on non-Muslims) in 1575, but a *volte face* – in the form of a more conciliatory policy toward Hindus – was in store.[116]

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[107] On the Indian and Ottoman contexts to this *ghazi* identity, see: ibid, especially 38–57, 139–64. See, also: Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*.

[108] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 107.

[109] Khalfaoui, 'al-Fatāwā l-ʿĀlamgīriyya'; Guenther, 'Hanafi *Fiqh*', 216–19.

[110] Jalal, *Partisans*, 32. For the merits of such a reading of the text, see: Khalfaoui, 'al-Fatāwā l-ʿĀlamgīriyya'; Guenther, 'Hanafi *Fiqh*', 210–13 for Aurangzeb's various motivations. Aurangzeb did, in fact, draw from the work in making laws, though he did so in a way that demonstrates his creativity and independence from – rather than his subordination to or dependence upon – its contents: *op. cit.*, 222–24.

[111] Guenther, 'Hanafi *Fiqh*', 211.

[112] Ibid, 213–14.

Another set of examples come from the Afghan imperium of the eighteenth century. Ahmad Shah Durrani had been exhorted to wage jihad in the (erstwhile) Mughal lands by Shah Wali Allah (1703–62), who also wrote to numerous other Muslim commanders and rulers – including the Rohilla Afghans settled in north India – to do the same as a religious duty and for the sake of Muslim power at a time of *fitna* (social discord).[117] Wali Allah came from a family of *qazis* who had served the Mughals, and his father had been among those who compiled the *Fatawa-i Alamgiri*. In his maturity, he came not only to deplore the degrading effect of the Persian cosmopolis and of Hindu influences upon Mughal rule, and not only hankered for a turn toward Arabic and the Arab world to renew Muslim sovereignty on the subcontinent, but also 'explicat[ed] the most systematic theory of jihad' in south Asia within a body of work that exerted considerable influence through the nineteenth century and, indeed, to this day.[118] Wali Allah described how coercive power could – and *should* – be used to undergird religious authority.[119] Whether or not his letters and writings played a part, Ahmad Shah *did* come to the Mughals' aid when they faced the Marathas at Panipat in 1761.

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[113] Flemming, *Essays*, 317–30, for dissection of early Ottoman examples.

[114] Eaton, *Islamic Traditions*, 123, for citation and useful discussion.

[115] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 287–300, for the text of the *Fathnama-i Chittor*.

[116] Khan, 'Religious Policy', 123.

[117] Jalal, *Partisans*, 53–55, which includes a balanced discussion of issues surrounding the authenticity of these letters.

Victorious, Ahmad Shah penned a letter to the Ottoman sultan that broached the motivations underlying his conquest. Islamic rule over India had prospered since Timur's lifetime, he claimed, but it was lately in need of restoration; hence, his declaration of jihad against the *kuffar* (infidel) to reinstate lawful Mughal authority, and his destruction of Hindu and Sikh temples in Delhi.[120] Although his epistle likely contains some truth, it is unlikely that Ahmad Shah was able to wage a holy war in a land where Hindus were the majority of the population and in a context where many of his allies or backers were non-Muslim.[121] At once, nevertheless, Ahmad Shah connected Afghans more deeply with the history of Muslim rule in India, presented the Durrani kingdom as an ally and saviour – rather than a threat – to the Mughal imperium, and fashioned his own image as a most upright Islamic prince.[122] In turn, the ascent of Durrani power changed the calculus for Indo-Afghan elites previously reluctant to support Ahmad Shah, with the result that works such as the *Khulasat al-Ansab* – attributed to the Rohilla chief, Hafiz Rahmat Khan – corroborated Durrani legitimacy, referring to Ahmad Shah's motives for invasion as jihad against the Marathas, Sikhs, and Jats 'for the sake of Islam and the honour and reputation of Afghans (*nang u namus-i afghanan*).'[123] All this stands to show that discourses of jihad were as valuable *after* the event as before, to protagonists and their circle but also to those well beyond it.

6.3.2 Dharamyudh

The clarion call to fight immoral or impious opponents, or those who were perceived to show no respect for the sanctity of a religious community's institutions, could be deeply powerful in a world where even mercenaries were closely connected to living holy men, departed saints, or sacred places (temples, shrines, mosques). That said, a ruler had to rein in the desire for rough justice by armed men in his service, not only their lust for rapine and unnecessary bloodshed, but also for tyranny and (temple) desecration (§3.2). For a conflict, any subsequent settlement, and their wider outcomes to be legitimate in the eyes of all involved, they had to proceed according to established norms; the greater rectitude claimed by the victor over the vanquished would otherwise ring hollow. It bears remembering that the 'conquered' maintained tremendous bargaining power and were critical to the making of those deliberations and agreements off the battlefield that are frequently elided with 'conquest' (§7.3.2).

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[118] Ibid, citation on 40, 41–42 for this worldview, and 45–57 for discussion of his thought on jihad.

[119] Zaman, 'Caliphate'.

[120] Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 56.

[121] Ibid, 56–57, 59.

[122] Such presentation of Afghans fit with parallel efforts by Indo-Afghans, who were pushing against their negative portrayal in Mughal propaganda by asserting a more self-confident identity, sometimes by creatively rewriting history and genealogy to do so: Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 54–55, 168.

[123] Ibid, here 61, but refer, also, to the discussion on 21.

Was there an equivalent concept or discourse to jihad among India's non-Muslim communities? The scriptural concept of *digvijaya*, or movement and conquest in all directions of the compass, was instantiated both discursively and in reality in medieval Hindu society, then becoming an important part of Vijayanagara imperial ideology.[124] As for Sikh discourses rationalising political action, these have usually painted militancy and violence as a necessary response by otherwise peaceful adherents to their own helplessness in the face of Mughal predation and persecution following the Mughals' execution of Guru Arjan in 1606 and especially through the agency of Guru Gobind (§2.4.4).[125] Against this, Hardip Singh Syan discerns highly contested attitudes toward violence and militancy. In the first step, Syan shows that 'peace' and 'violence' were not strictly separated in medieval and early modern south Asia, nor in the Hindu texts and traditions drawn upon by thinkers – including Sikh thinkers – to articulate their own ideas of the role and place of violence. Yogis, monks, and other warrior ascetics saw no difficulty in engaging in violence or politics; religion and violence were not oppositional binaries, no matter how hard that is for us to understand. Pashtun mercenaries and Sufi *qalandars*, likewise, readily intermarried in furtherance of their mutual social, commercial, and political objectives, as we have seen.

Violence could take different forms and serve various functions; thus, it was vigorously debated among Sikhs in the seventeenth century amidst changes spearheaded by the Sikh leadership. Arranged on one side were Jats, who aspired to become members of the Rajput/Kshatriya military aristocracy (§2.1.2) and consequently saw soldiering as 'pivotal to their social mobility'.[126] Khatris, however, saw 'violence in terms of purity and Vedic social order' and considered themselves part of the Persianate elite; their route to social betterment involved becoming more courtly, which – as far as violence was concerned – meant engaging with Persianate chivalric codes and normative texts.[127] To appeal to both groups, Guru Hargobind proclaimed the importance of *miri* (temporal or princely power) alongside *piri* (spiritual power or discipleship), and so set about creating a Persianate court and raising a military. His rival, Miharban, fundamentally contested Hargobind's guruship and the whole manner of his interpretation and practise of Sikhism, including militarisation (§2.4.3). However, Hargobind was able to appeal to Jats and lower-evaluated castes more than Mirharban, and even to some Khatris.[128] By the 1670s, the divisions of the descendants of each lineage had deepened and solidified, with Guru Hargoibind's successor – Guru Tegh Bahadur – garnering the far larger following.[129]

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[124] For an elementary foray into discourses of violence and its rationalisation in Indian society over the longue durée, from ancient India onward, see: Houben and van Kooij, eds., *Violence Denied*. See, also: Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam, 'Ideologies'.

[125] Syan, *Sikh Militancy*, 6–10 for discussion of such historiography.

[126] Ibid, 40.

[127] Ibid, 46.

Tegh Bahadur's execution has long been portrayed as a flashpoint: as an instantiation of Aurangzeb's project to turn the Mughal realm into an Islamic theocracy, it necessitated the concerted – and violent – reaction of Hindus and Sikhs to the attendant persecution, with the guru's son and successor, Gobind (r. 1675–1708), thus creating the Khalsa and pursuing a more militant path. This, Syan argues, is doubly misleading. On the one hand, recent studies offer a corrective to the tired portrayal of Aurangzeb as a Sunni zealot who persecuted non-Muslims, meanwhile interrogating how and why such characterisation came into being.[130] We might also set Mughal policy during Aurangzeb's reign into broader context, comparing it to the (far harsher) measures towards non-(Shiʿi) Muslims taken by the Safavids in the later seventeenth century, which has been interpreted as part and parcel with the larger project of strengthening the state rather than being primarily about religion.[131] On the other hand, there never existed a singular Hindu or Sikh community to rise up in opposition to Mughal imperialism, so much as a profusion of different groups with varying relations to the state and highly varied responses to its policies.[132] Mention of Aurangzeb or the Mughal state at large in connection with Tegh Bahadur's execution in early Sikh writing is limited, indicative of how his death 'did not cause outright revolution' but instead 'shifted the attention of Sikh discourse towards sovereignty and the recreation of an ideal social order', since the Sikh community 'had to possess an alternative vision of political power' if it 'wanted to replace or to reform the Mughal state'.[133]

To do so, Guru Gobind and others – including his rival as Sikh leader, Harji – engaged with retellings of Hindu tales to validate their own guruship and proffer their own political vision for Sikhs within Vaishnavite and Shaivite or Shakti frameworks.[134] Gobind and Harji's respective reworkings of the *Ramayana*, for example, at once connected both men to Rama (a Vishnu avatar) through their Sodhi clan lineage and membership of the solar dynasty, yet stressed diametrically different kinds of leadership: Gobind Singh emphasised the importance of political agency whereas Harji was more renunciationist, in the manner of Miharban.[135] The creation of the Khalsa was widely embraced by rural, mostly lower-caste Punjabis who had much to gain from the acquisition of Kshatriya identity upon their acceptance of the Khalsa code of conduct (*rahit maryada*) and their initiation as Khalsa Sikhs. Others saw incorporation into the Khalsa as jeopardising service to the Mughals and the benefits accruing from it. Anti- and pro-Khalsa factions soon formed in Delhi, the former representing those who had most to lose from their severance from established ways of life, like the prosperous Khatris, the latter formed of those who stood to gain from access to education and the opportunity for social mobility afforded by Khalsa initiation, such as artisans, peasants, and petty traders.[136]

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[128] Ibid, 48–104.

[129] Ibid, 105–43.

[130] Truschke, *Aurangzeb*; Schofield, 'Aurangzeb'. Another way into this reassessment has been to interrogate why Dara Shukoh has been presented by generations of historians as his brother's 'ill-fated', 'liberal' opposite; see: Kinra, 'Infantilising'. Another still has been to look at vernacular perspectives on Aurangzeb from outside the Persianate centre, which have added further nuance to our understanding: Murphy and Pauwels, 'Alamgir', for an introduction to a special issue taking this direction.

[131] See: Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 81–103; Dale, *Muslim Empires*, 253.

[132] Syan, *Sikh Militancy*, 144–45.

[133] Ibid, 146–47.

[134] Note the debates regarding the authorship discussed in §2.4.4 regarding some of the sources drawn upon by Syan from which the present discussion is derived. See, also: Rinehart, *Dasam Granth*, 106–10.

The upshot of Gobind's and the Khalsa's ascendance around the turn of the century was not only the militarisation of the Sikhs, but the elaboration of a philosophy that emphasised Sikh activism in politics, painting Aurangzeb as a 'bad king' and part of the steadily more hostile stance taken toward the Mughal state.[137] In the last years of his life (1700–08), Gobind wielded both the sword and the pen against the Mughal emperor's 'injustices', with his *Zafarnama* ('Epistle of Victory') – written in Persian, replete with references to the Persian classics and in the Persianate *masnavi* form – an especially stinging yet aesthetically stunning critique of Aurangzeb's kingship.[138] It should not be taken for granted that militarism was the only way forward, nor should we assume that a Sikh martial tradition was fully realised at the time of Gobind's death; the agency of peasants proved vital to the spread of the Khalsa in the eighteenth century, to its overall character, and to historical and hagiographic production about it and about the Sikh leadership.[139] Banda Bahadur, one of the tenth guru's disciples, assumed the Sikh leadership upon Gobind's death and adopted a more decisively militant opposition to Mughal authority in the years that followed.[140]

The Sikh notion of *dharamyudh* (holy war or, more literally, a fight for the faith) was deployed in ways that made it a direct analogue of the concept of jihad. This is because it was used to justify conflicts fought for righteousness or justice broadly conceived; *rakhi*, for instance, was protection provided to cultivators by Sikh leaders, and a means through which the latter accumulated territorial control.[141] The Sikhs pooled their resources along the lines of kinship, but also likely transacted on the open military labour market, for non-Sikhs had formed a part of Gobind's military contingents, much as non-Muslims fought for Indo-Muslim rulers.[142] Thus, *dharamyudh* ought to be interpreted as flexibly as *jihad*. Those leaders proclaiming *dharamyudh* against the Mughals and Afghans after Gobind's death were likewise flexible in their approach to alliance building, having cut their teeth in the service of the Marathas, Mughals, or Afghans, while also being willing to occasionally form tactical alliances with them during conflict with other Sikhs or non-Sikhs to pursue their personal aims.[143]

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[135] Syan, *Sikh Militancy*, 151–86.

[136] Ibid, 186–205.

[137] Ibid, 213–50.

[138] Fenech, *Zafar-namah*.

[139] Dhavan, *When Sparrows Become Hawks*, examines the eighteenth-century Sikh cause in more depth.

[140] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 82–98, for a survey of Banda Bahadur's leadership and Sikh political (in)action in the decades after his death.

6.4 Gunpowder Empires and the Military Revolution – Reconsidered

Gunpowder recipes ricocheted from China, where vintage concoctions were improved, to Europe via the Muslim world – all in the span of the thirteenth century. Gunpowder-utilising technologies – including cannon and handguns – were honed to a significant degree first in Europe; these, too, soon had a global career. These stylised facts are the building blocks and point of departure for a lively set of debates about the 'Military Revolution' (MR) and 'gunpowder empires'.

6.4.1 The Military Revolution

Presented by Geoffrey Parker in 1988, the MR thesis can be sketched as follows.[144] The development of new artillery technologies from the sixteenth century necessitated the development of new fortresses able to withstand their firepower, notably the *trace italienne* (a bastion fort, usually polygonal). To successfully besiege these forts, larger armies – biased toward infantry and away from cavalry – were needed. The enormous cost of such forts and such huge armies meant only rulers – and not feudal lords – could afford their construction, which necessitated yet also facilitated centralisation. Another technology connected to the MR was volley fire, in which soldiers in well-drilled companies fired in turns to maintain a constant shower raining down on opponents, usually with one line of soldiers reloading their weapons while another fired.[145]

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[141] Grewal, *Sikhs*, 92–94.

[142] Rinehart, *Dasam Granth*, 20. To this can be added the assistance of Afghans to Gobind's cause – *op. cit.*, 22.

[143] Dhavan, *When Sparrows Become Hawks*, 4–50, 99–100; Alam, *Crisis*, 155–62.

[144] A useful guide to Parker's analysis can be found in: Black, *Military Revolution*, 1–7, which also notes his debt to Michael Roberts' earlier work.

[145] Parker, *Military Revolution*, 6–44, which includes discussion of the original version of the thesis presented by Michael Roberts in 1955.

Other than the diminished power of the knights and cavalry, a consequence of all this was that drill training became essential, entailing the need for centralised regiments, and hence a state capable of supporting such a military establishment and degree of organisation.[146] Again, this made military and bureaucratic centralisation requisite, with more powerful (absolutist?) states emerging in consequence. In not being willing or able to keep-up, non-European powers, such as the Ottomans, supposedly lagged militarily and were thus overtaken economically and politically.[147] Indeed, the even larger outcome of the emergence of strong and more sharply centralised states in Europe by 1800, Parker and others argue, was their outward expansion. The loading of cannon onto the naval fleets of militarised European powers paved the way for the so-called 'rise of the West'; that is, the spread of European imperialisms around the globe.[148]

A number of scholars have critically refined the thesis, whether by augmenting the timeline on which the MR unfolded, or by suggesting that the notion of a single Military Revolution obscures the sequence of a number of smaller and incremental military revolutions in response to a whole host of ongoing challenges and constraints.[149] A more grave critique takes issue with the accuracy of the underlying analysis: David Parrott observes that through much of the early modern period, western and central European militaries continued to contract private suppliers, with European states only substantially centralising their military organisation (and thus their bureaucracies) from the later eighteenth century. 'Reliance on private organisation and capital in raising and maintaining armies and navies was neither synonymous with military ineffectiveness,' Parrott argues, 'nor an obscure historical cul-de-sac, a system which had no future amongst the rulers and administrators of early modern states.'[150] Rather, a state's military requirements – whether the supply of mercenaries and privateers for its army and navy, provisioning and equipping its forces, manufacturing and distributing munitions and weapons, or building defensive structures and constructing warships – were all largely (and largely satisfactorily) met by private contractors before c. 1760, who also financed these undertakings and directed them with (varying degrees of) autonomy.[151]

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[146] Parker notes the use of military contractors as a stop-gap until standing armies could be raised in European states from the seventeenth century: ibid, 45–81.

[147] Ibid, 126–28.

[148] Ibid, 82–145. Returning to the Military Revolution in light of debates over the Great Divergence, the economic historian, Philip T. Hoffman, has sought to explain why European states prevailed in the development of gunpowder technologies and thereby gained tremendous advantages in the production of violence, paving the way for overseas conquest and colonisation before the Industrial Revolution: Hoffman, 'Why Was it Europeans'. In a different way, Priya Satia's *Empire of Guns* has also connected the manufacture of arms and the production of violence to empire and industrialisation.

[149] Black, *Military Revolution*, especially 20–65, although his criticisms fall heavier on Roberts' than Parker's version of the thesis; Jacob and Visoni-Alonzo, *Military Revolution*, for a fresh, global-scale, and comparativist critique and revisionism.

[150] Parrott, *Business of War*, 19.

In fact, the British state remained a corporate entity even after c. 1760, as Priya Satia argues compellingly in an entangled history of Britain's empire, its manufacturing sector, and the production of violence.[152] It maintained transactional relationships with a range of public institutions (including the Royal Mint, the Royal Armoury, and the Bank of England) and a range of private actors and firms through the period of imperial expansion that took place against the backdrop of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Among the latter were gun makers and coin minters, who happened to be related both technologically and at the level of the firm or its owners through marriage and familial networks, and who were themselves connected to the very trading companies with whom the state's interests and its business was intimately bound up, not least the East India Company and the Royal African Company. Given the weight of such evidence, the processes of military contracting in the sixteenth to eighteenth-century Ottoman and Mughal empires, described above, seems part of a far larger pattern, rather than an anomalous or regressive development. And, finally, we ought to heed the Ottoman historian, Choon Hwee Koh, when she argues that contracting was neither symptom nor cause of decentralisation, and could, in fact, support state strengthening even as it empowered local agents.[153]

An even graver critique is that the 'rise of the West' reeks of teleological thinking inasmuch as it looks back to explain the European conquest and colonisation in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the same time, the necessary adaption of military technologies and strategies to the varied landscapes of conflict is flattened out in favour of a singular, supposedly superior military complex. Overall, this does little justice either to Asia or Europe's historical experience.[154] Old World regimes, more so than New World polities, *were* able to hold their own against the European cutting edge. A little divergence between Europe and Asia *had* opened up in the century before c.1550, Tonio Andrade lately notes, but the ensuing encounter of Chinese militaries and the Portuguese triggered imitation and innovation that led to an 'age of parity' lasting until the early eighteenth century (when the 'great military divergence' opened up, paving the way for Qing defeat at the hands of the British).[155] A similar picture emerges of the Ottoman world, thanks to the attention Gábor Ágoston draws to the Ottoman state's creation and rapid expansion of regular (and salaried) units responsible for use of artillery technologies, foreshadowing those associated with the MR by centuries, and how ordnance and musket technology kept up with that of European rivals until at least the late seventeenth century.[156] The fruits of all these developments in east Asia and those in the connected field of the Muslim world and Europe were also accessible to southeast Asian states in proximity to the coast, who harnessed them to their advantage.[157] That said, southeast Asian armies relied on imported firearms to a greater extent, so that technical change was more anaemic compared to their south Asian neighbours, let alone Europeans.[158] But what, indeed, of south Asian militaries?

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[151] This amounted to a 'military devolution' rather than a revolution, occurring in the same period as the MR is said to have taken place. That said, far from undermining theories of the growth of the state, it is argued that it was precisely such privatisation that allowed the state to vastly expand its reach: Parrott, *Business of War*. See, also: Sikora, 'Continuity and Change'.

[152] Satia, *Empire of Guns*, especially 25–180.

[153] Koh, 'Ottoman Postmaster'.

[154] Roy, *Military Transition*, surveys developments across early modern Asia in response to these issues.

[155] Andrade, *Gunpowder Age*, especially 1–12, 103–14, 124–234. See, also: Andrade *et al*, 'Korean Military Revolution'.

In India, cannon, handheld firearms, fireworks, rockets, and explosives were already in use by c. 1500, as drawn to attention by Iqtidar Alam Khan and which Richard M. Eaton and Philip B. Wagoner's more recent work corroborates.[159] A number of means made this possible, including the Bahmani sultans' exchange of spices with Mamluk agents in return for military technology from the Ottoman lands, as well as Mamluk or Ottoman gunners and gunsmiths entering the service of Indian kings.[160] After the Portuguese arrival in the Indian Ocean world, the capture of artillery from defeated Portuguese naval forces and the employment of Portuguese mercenaries and 'renegades' by Indian masters supported further technological transfer and improvement. As many as two thousand Portuguese mercenaries and freelance warriors served in armies in India, mainland southeast Asia, and China by the early seventeenth century, as well as renegades (smaller in number but more significant in impact), which puts the great scope for technological transfer into perspective.[161] Another channel, of course, was from the north – that is, via the Mongol world and through the injections of central Eurasian technology and knowledge brought by the Delhi sultans from the thirteenth century – though this seems to have been more important for the introduction of gunpowder and early explosives and firearms than the most cutting-edge artillery of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[162]

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[156] Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan*; Ágoston, 'Firearms and Military Adaptation'.

[157] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, especially 48, 59–61, 146, 152, 257, 292.

[158] Ibid, 60, 437.

[159] Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms*, 10, 41–142; Eaton and Wagoner, 'Warfare'. *C.f.* Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 146, and n. 52 for the contestation of Khan's belief in the Indian use of firearms technology before the fifteenth century.

There were prior, pre-gunpowder-era changes in defensive architecture thanks to ideas transmitted from the north following the expansion of the Delhi Sultanate into the south; see Michell and Philon, *Islamic Architecture*, 30–32, 84–85, 194–95, 270–21, and *passim*, with the volume also surveying the impact of new firearms technolgies.

[160] Eaton and Wagoner, 'Warfare', 12–14, 16.

[161] Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese Empire*, 262–83.

[162] *C.f.* Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms*, 15–33. By the advent of the Mughal period, with Babur's invasion bringing to India numerous new technologies, the northern channel was more important: *op. cit.*, 64–73.

Ultimately, not only did Indian commanders make use of artillery before c. 1500, but Indian gunsmiths assimilated and adapted Turkish and European technologies to produce weapons of such quality that they were sought after by the Portuguese themselves. This fact undermines a central tenet of the MR thesis concerning the inability of Asian states to forge firearms of sufficient – let alone comparable – quality to those made by Europeans, while raising the possibility of East-West transfers of technology, not merely West-East ones.[163] Yet, that being said, the use of these innovations was uneven. The Bijapuri sultans possessed a powerful 'modern' artillery, which was carted off by Vijayanagara's ruler upon his victory over Bijapur at Raichur in 1520. Because he had succeeded without these new-fangled technologies, he did not see the worth of developing local artillery manufacture and of deploying artillery in future campaigns.[164] In the meantime, Bijapur and its neighbours learnt from the mistakes at Raichur and tapped into the continued flow of new ideas from Eurasia. Having already appropriated artillery technologies, these were further developed into new forms of firepower, including new types of swivel-mounted guns and cannon, the latter of a type that represented the cutting-edge, globally.[165]

Having combined forces to defeat the Vijayanagara armies in 1565, this victory vindicating their technological investments, the sultanates of the north Deccan were enriched enough to make major expenditures. The result, between 1569 and 1590, was the acceleration of a process started a few decades prior; namely, the rebuilding of the Deccan's pre-gunpowder bastions, which integrated innovative design features to support the effective deployment of its modern artillery.[166] Their borders stabilised, the rulers of the Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Bidar, and Golkonda sultanates more confidently asserted the individual identities of their states, not least through a burst of cultural patronage and production in styles that became distinctive to their respective localities.[167] Architectural innovation largely ceased, however. Indian rulers may have known about the *trace italienne* (Fig. 6D), for instance, and the

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[163] Eaton and Wagoner, 'Warfare', 17. This does not preclude the fact, however, that technological change in India stagnated by the end of the century.

[164] Ibid, 17–22.

[165] Ibid, especially 22–28.

[166] Ibid, especially 28–41. For a deeper analysis of these issues, see: Eaton and Wagoner, *Contested Sites*, 242–79. For a visual survey of defensive architecture in south India under the Deccan sultans and their successors up to c. 1800, see: Michell and Zebrowski, *Architecture and Art*, 23–62.

[167] Eaton and Wagoner, 'Warfare', 45–47.

A richer picture is needed of where firearms were made across south Asia through this and the remainder of the early modern period, for whom (including restrictions on ownership or trade), and by who. Aside from cutting-edge guns and ordnance, more detail about Indian manufacture of swords (or else the 'import' thereof) would also help enrich our picture of the market for violence. Lahore, for instance, was famed for its swords into the nineteenth century: Francklin, ed., *Military Memoirs*, 102, 344.

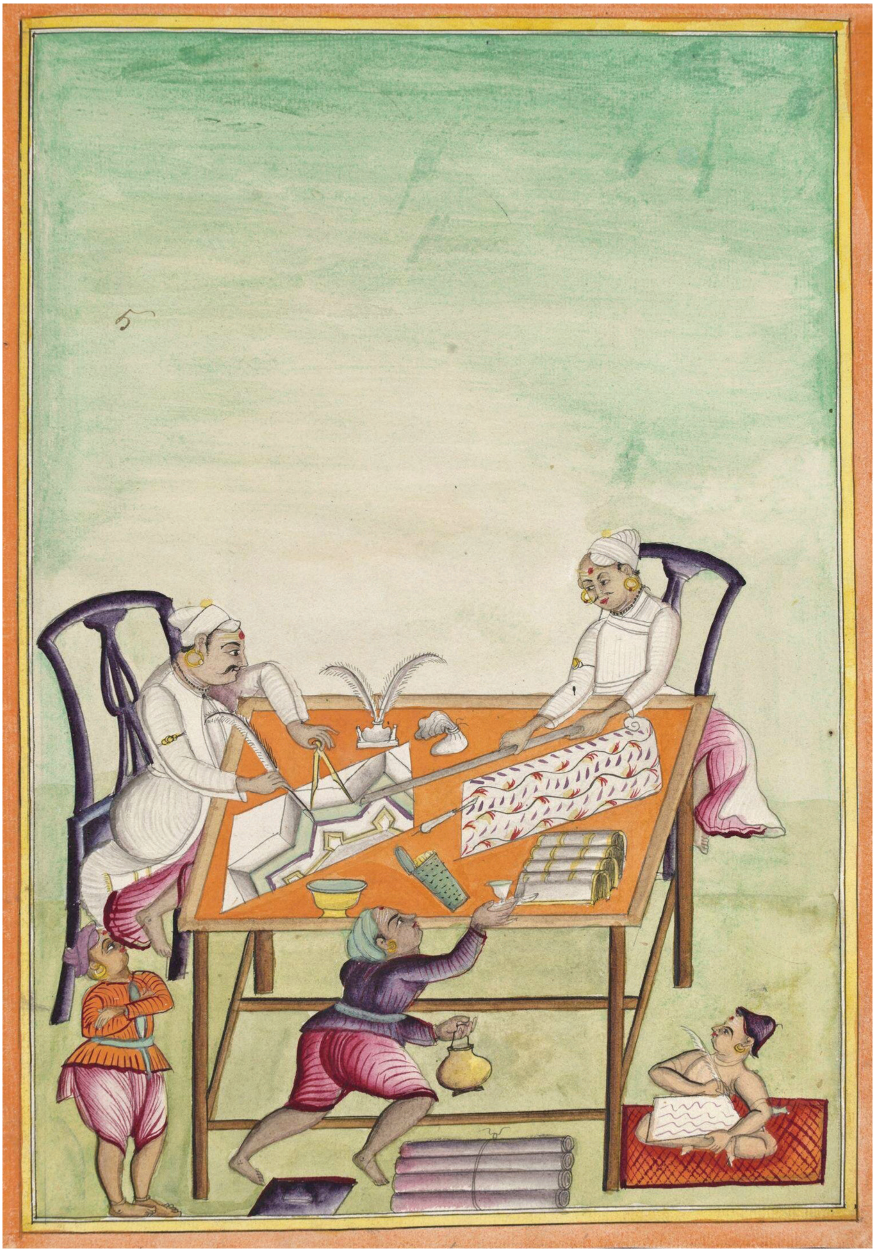

Fig. 6D Indian Draughtsmen Working on Ground Plan of *Trace Italienne*, from the Boileau Album (watercolour; Thanjavur artist; c. 1785)

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Portuguese certainly laid out forts on such plans in Goa, but there were reasons they chose not to build and improve such structures themselves.

Instead of continually ratcheting-up of defensive fortifications through competitive mimesis vis-à-vis their political rivals, as seen in Europe on Parker's analysis, Indian rulers abandoned making improvements to fort designs in favour of relocating to strategic places.[168] This was partly because the Deccani rulers' new major opponents were the Mughals, whose large armies and capability for long-lasting sieges with superior firepower meant fortifying existing towns provided little protection, whereas the strategic location of new forts (and towns built inside and around them) upon hilltops afforded greater advantages.[169] There was no cultural or intellectual decline *per se*, but there was a drying up by the seventeenth century of flows of technically skilled migrants from the Islamic world who formerly brought to their patrons a knowledge of the military cutting-edge. Adopting gunpowder technologies – firearms, but also defensive structures – did not entail the untrammelled unfolding of the MR in south Asia, therefore; circumstances mitigated against further developments in favour of new approaches to defence. As we shall see shortly, the way gunpowder technologies did (not) develop neither left Indian regimes at the mercy of the European powers, nor ought we assume that European firepower and knowhow was intrinsically superior and sufficient to vanquish Asian rivals.[170]

6.4.2 Gunpowder Empires

This brings us to the category of 'gunpowder empire', which has been used to describe the Mughal Empire and its Ottoman and Safavid counterparts. This formulation, deriving from Marshall G. Hodgson's work and later popularised by W.H. McNeill and others, connects the highly effective use of cutting-edge gunpowder technologies to imperial expansion and subsequent 'florescence' (§10.6).[171] Yet, these ideas have run into trouble on numerous grounds, including the fact that important phases of imperial expansion preceded the adoption of the latest artillery; the difficulty in retaining any monopoly over these technologies, which just as easily landed in the hands of rivals; and the poverty of reducing military, and thus economic, and thus intellectual and cultural achievements, to the canny adoption of particular technology.[172]

Nor was artillery the most powerful technology by and of itself, for how it was used was pivotal. By the mid-fifteenth century, conflicts in eastern Europe exposed the Ottomans to a novel military technology employed in Bohemia, then Hungary and Russia: the wagon laager, 'a temporary defensive battlefield entrenchment comprising chiefly wagons, used widely for sheltering the matchlock-wielding infantry', which permitted, for the first time, 'the simultaneous deployment of mounted archery, heavy cavalry, matchlock-bearing infantry, and field artillery.'[173] But the Ottomans appropriated this technology and adapted its use to powerful effect, placing the laager along the front of their battle formation whereas their European rivals built them at the rear. The success of this strategy was demonstrated in 1514 when Selim I defeated the Safavid army of Shah Ismail at Chaldiran. Testament to the ready diffusion of technologies and the dilution of any technological lead, this defeat prompted the Safavids to adopt Ottoman tactics, which they did to great success against the Uzbeks in 1528, who followed their lead in turn, benefiting from the advice of Ottoman professionals in their service. And, finally, the employment in Babur's army of Ustad Ali Quli from Iran and Mustafa Rumi from the Ottoman Empire, and the deployment of this novel technology and military strategy, proved critical to Mughal victory at Panipat in 1526–27.[174]

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[168] Sohoni, 'Fortified Strongholds', 115–21.

[169] Ibid, 113.

[170] de la Garza, *War*, especially 182–99, on the 'unfinished [military] revolution', and *passim*.

[171] Hodgson, *Venture*, especially 17–22, 26, 147. See, also: Streusand, *Gunpowder Empires*.

[172] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 40–50, for useful critical reflections. See, also: Hoffman, 'Western Europe's Comparative Advantage'.

In the following decades, the Mughals fought few pitched battles, in large part because of the absence of major adversaries, with heavy cavalry sufficing to ensure victory.[175] In the mid-sixteenth century, sieges were more common – at the fort of Mankot (1557), Gwalior (1558–59), Chauragarh (1564), Satwas (1567), Awadh (1567–68), and Ranthambhor (1569), for instance.[176] Ideally, forts would be taken without any siege at all, for their destruction was not only difficult, perhaps lasting months or years and using vast amounts of materiel, but necessitated their repair after being taken, for they were important defensive bastions, after all. In all, this entailed huge costs, making it preferable to negotiate with the commander of the fort; sieges only began once bargaining had been frustrated.[177] One explanation for the frequency of sieges is that the Mughals' opponents preferred their chances standing their ground in forts. Another takes stock of the terrain, for the early battles were fought on the Punjab Plains and the Gangetic basin, spaces that permitted large cavalry manoeuvres, whereas subsequent conflicts pushed the Mughals deeper into the forested terrain of central and western India, which were home to large stone forts and where sieges were naturally preponderant.[178] As the Mughal state enlarged in this way, so its army developed, moving away from its nomadic heritage and the use of evasive or shock tactics and mounted archers, to the techniques of the militaries of sedentary states.[179]

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[173] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 32.

[174] Ibid, 32–34, and 35–36, where victory at Panipat is contrasted with Akbar's victory over the Afghans on the same battleground around three decades later, on which occasion the strength of the opposition was weaker and both sides' military strategy was fairly matched, causing something of a 'tactical stalemate.' See, also: Ágoston, 'Firearms and Military Adaptation, 91–93, for discussion of the Hussite *Wagenburg* and its diffusion and development in the Ottoman and other Islamicate empires.

[175] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 36, building on the work of Douglas Streusand.

[176] Ibid, 38.

[177] Ibid, 38–39.

[178] Ibid, 52–53.

From the perspective of ruling centres, one key issue was the inability to monopolise violence in the face of the steady arming of the Indian subcontinent. In the sixteenth century, Mughal firearms technology was improving, and was certainly not inferior to what was available to middle Eastern and European states, including the Ottomans. It was not until the seventeenth century that such innovation stagnated at the same time that these technologies diffused more widely. The spread of muskets and matchlocks, and the resultant arming of local chiefs and peasant communities over the seventeenth century, meant even the areas proximate to centres of imperial authority (Delhi, Agra, Ahmadabad) turned into *mawas* (rebellious territory) requiring *zortalab* (coercion).[180] The spread of firearms manufacture and use beyond the imperial frontiers was also troubling. If, as Pratyay Nath argues, 'gunpowder weaponry – artillery, matchlocks, or mines – did not facilitate Akbar's early and decisive military victories', it was because their impact was relatively limited or even blunted, especially in the areas beyond the imperial heartland.[181]

Against the Ahoms in Assam in the 1660s, for example, the Mughals were faced with heavy firepower, so diffuse had gunpowder technology like matchlocks, artillery, and fireworks become. At the same time, they were confronted with the unfamiliar and difficult environment of the region: thick vegetation and forests that had to be cleared and felled to allow the movement of troops, and severe monsoons that led to flooding. The Ahoms turned their deep knowledge of the terrain to their advantage, attacking the *thana*s (military posts) and granaries, and cutting off the supply lines to the base at Dhaka, the resultant crisis prompting the Mughals to swiftly sign a treaty and retreat from Assam.[182] Similarly, the extreme cold of the Himalayan borderland not only altered the timing of the campaign season but also made for challenging logistics, since all food supplies had to be transported to the front in an area of limited cultivation, and since armies had to be watchful over the state of the passes lest heavy snowfall prevent their retreat.[183] These factors affected Mughal campaigns in Qandahar, Balkh, and Kashmir through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The local tribesmen of the Afghan highlands, much like the Ahoms in Assam, used the landscape to their advantage, in this case taking positions at the top of the passes cut through the mountains and rolling rocks down toward the Mughal army below, to take one example.[184] These conditions made for the spectacular disaster of the Balkh-Badakhshan campaign during Shah Jahan's reign, when the Mughals sustained 'enormous loss of life, property, and prestige, the survivors crawl[ing] back to Kabul in late 1647.'[185] In sum, the utility of 'gunpowder empires' seems limited, much as the idea of the Military Revolution seems flawed.[186]

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[179] Ibid, 110. *C.f.* Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 186.

[180] Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms*, 164–90. See, also: Kolff, 'Peasants, 252–54.

[181] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 49 for citation.

[182] Ibid, 71–74.

[183] Ibid, 82–108.

[184] Ibid, 190.

6.4.3 European Militaries and European Imperialisms

What, finally, to make of the link between European military developments and overseas expansion posited by Geoffrey Parker in his version of the MR thesis? Marketised violence was widespread across the Indian Ocean world, not only India. South Indian mercenaries served in the Toungoo (Burma) and in Kotte (Sri Lanka) kingdoms, for instance, often in exchange for cash or salaries rather than land grants (which were otherwise customary).[187] Long before the Portuguese even contemplated the conquest of what they called *Ceilao* (Ceylon), which only came about in the latter part of the sixteenth century, Portuguese renegades and representatives of the *Estado* were serving as mercenaries and the military allies of Kotte's rulers. And, in the 1620s, the Dutch executed their massacre of the inhabitants of the Banda archipelago with the assistance of *ronin* (masterless samurai from Japan).[188]

Such facts place European militaries in Asian political contests entirely two centuries prior to the East India Company's lease of its military might to Indian rulers, the latter phenomenon becoming part and parcel of the process of colonial expansion.[189] If anything, it was into a ready-made and well-developed world of marketised violence that the English and French merely inserted themselves in the eighteenth century. Most notably, the Marathas offered their troops to the players in numerous early eighteenth-century succession disputes; when these conflicts and their associated costs spiralled, so the Marathas' claims to land and revenues increased. The 'subsidiary alliance system', Stewart Gordon notes, 'was not a brilliant strategy developed by the French or the English, but a common and probably inevitable feature of post-Mughal, eighteenth-century politics.'[190] It was essentially a kind of protection racket; when Indian rulers defaulted on payments, the Company took control of 'assets' – namely, the kingdom itself – thereby enlarging its territory.[191] That said, one ought not understate the extent to which Europeans transformed the nature of killing for the worse, even as the path to British dominance over south Asia and the wider Indian Ocean arena was partly paved by their Indian predecessors.[192]

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[185] Ibid, 108 for citation.

[186] See, also: Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, especially 161–68; Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 134–36, for a summary and evaluation of Douglas Streusand's testing of, and objections to, the Hodgson-McNeill thesis.

[187] Biedermann, *(Dis)Connected Empires*, 23, 71–72, 78, and 142.

[188] Ghosh, *Nutmeg's Curse*.

[189] Another precursor was the farming of tax revenues in the *Estado's* settlements, the enrichment of Banias, and the latter's loans to the Portuguese to finance their military competition; see: Münch Miranda, 'Fiscal System', 216. The English vitally depended on Indian financiers to fund their wars of expansion in the next century, as revealed by Bayly, *Rulers*.

[190] Gordon, *Marathas*, 138.

[191] Bayly, *Indian Society*, especially 89–95.

There were important differences in the capacity to make violence among the 'official' European presence in the Indian Ocean world. The largest capacity was possessed by the Portuguese *Estado*, while the Jesuit missionaries accompanying the Portuguese may have been the 'world's first global arms salesmen'.[193] They were followed by the VOC, and distantly trailed by the EIC; the latter's forces did not come close to matching those of the Dutch until the 1740s. That said, Dutch massacres in the Spice Islands were almost synchronous with English atrocities in north America, such that the implication ought not be that the English were uncapable of waging extraordinary violence, and we must not forget that the EIC was supported by the Royal Navy from time-to-time.[194] Nevertheless, the larger differences reflected the Portuguese and Dutch strategy, which was to pursue conflict as a means to acquiring territory for the furtherance of trade, and exercising sovereignty on the seas (specifically in the Portuguese case), unlike the English strategy, for the most part.[195]

Competing ambitions on the terraqueous Mughal-Portuguese 'frontier', c. 1590–1640, or between the Dutch and Madurai state following the establishment of a VOC factory in 1645, to take two examples, gave rise to a generally uneasy coexistence, occasional strategic convergence, and sporadic flashpoints of (contained) conflict.[196] Of the relatively few wars between a European power and an Indian military before c. 1750, however, little evidence can be found of the former's outright military superiority in the sense of bringing them decisive victories.[197] One striking example is the Anglo-Mughal War (1686–90), the first attempt to aggress the Mughals by the Company – in collusion with the British state – under the leadership of Sir Josiah Child, a merchant turned Company grandee. Anger and frustration over their trading conditions was enough to convince the belligerents to act, though we should set this decision within the context of the Company's steady militarisation in Asia to counter threats posed by English interlopers and the Dutch; an unmandated and unsuccessful yet decisive and roughly concurrent turn to empire-building by its servants in such locales as western Sumatra; desperate efforts to preserve its monopoly privileges in the face of challengers and critics in Britain; and its alliance with the 'Stuart absolutist project'.[198] Indeed, the war strategy was broad, encompassing 'the Persian Gulf, to recover payments the English felt they were owed based on the agreement reached after the expulsion of the Portuguese in Hormuz in the 1620s; Siam, which had become a haven for English interlopers as well as a growing French ally; Bengal, where the Company also wanted expanded trading privileges as well as an independent settlement to fend off Mughal, Dutch, and Portuguese rivals alike', and the war fought around Bombay in western India, which was the locus of their greatest tactical failings and ultimate humiliation.[199]

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[192] This is also not to deny the conscious prising open by the Portuguese and other Europeans of hostilities among the rulers of Asian states in their own interest. Europeans also recruited local men into their militaries, so the flow between the Europeans and the military labour markets was two-way in nature. On both points, see: Scammell, 'Indigenous Assistance', 5–10; idem, 'Pillars', 481–86. On European genocide in the early modern Indian Ocean world, see: Ghosh, *Nutmeg's Curse*, especially 31–47.

[193] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 23, for the citation deriving from Peter Perdue's work. *C.f.* Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 99, 123, who argues that rulers could not afford to be too coercive or use excessive compulsion because the range and competition between entrepôts and ports meant merchants could readily relocate.

[194] Ghosh, *Nutmeg's Curse*, 23–27, 44–45, for this comparison, and *passim*. On the fraught dependence on the Navy, see: Chaudhuri, *Trading World*, 109–10.

[195] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 122–27, for a useful exploration of Portuguese concepts of sovereignty on the seas, its ramifications, and the views of Asian political and commercial elites. See: Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy*, 252–97, for an evaluation of European and Asian coercive capabilities and strategies in the Indian Ocean world before c. 1700 leading to the characterisation of the period as an 'age of contained conflict'. Kruijtzer argues that the Portuguese were to some contemporaries '*the* cause of the Dutch in Asia'; Dutch aggression against the Portuguese was viewed by some Dutchmen as 'a just war and the foundation of colonies and intimidation of Asians […] only as a necessary step in the extension of the Dutch struggle for liberty and redress of the, in the words of Grotius, "manifestly unjust…situation in which the Iberian peoples hold the entire world tributary."' – Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia*, 67, for citation, and 18–73.

[196] Flores, *Unwanted Neighbours*; Vink, *Encounters*.

The British sent a vast armada to the Indian Ocean – the largest, in fact, before the Anglo-French conflicts in Asia during the Revolutionary Wars of the 1790s. The Mughal navy was actually the fleet of the Sidi admiral, Yakut Khan. It outnumbered the combined Anglo-Maratha opposition in Bombay, readily pushing it back in 1689 at the same time that the British were pushed back in the Bay of Bengal. The defeat was disastrous: Bombay was so flattened by the closing Mughal siege, and its population so depleted, that the survivors almost blew up the fort before sailing for England once and for all. They sued for peace, nevertheless, but the attack and capture of the *Ganj-i-Sawai* and the *Fateh Muhammad* by the pirate captain Henry Every a few years later resulted in Aurangzeb embargoing the Company's trade in retaliation.[200] This latter incident reminds us that the fruits of military innovation could be enjoyed by European interlopers and pirates to the detriment of the 'official' European presence and its supposed 'rise' over the rest of the world.[201] The Company's trade and reputation was in tatters as its stock price crashed; it was not until the early eighteenth century that its fortunes revived.[202] The ensuing decades, furthermore, saw the EIC lose more ships than it gained in its conflict with the Maratha navy under the command of Kanohji Angria.[203]

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[197] Wilson, *India Conquered*, 27–81, for Anglo-Indian tensions before Plassey. See, also: Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 225–47, on the gradual 'closing of the maritime frontier' by Europeans.

[198] Vaughn, 'John Company Armed'; Veevers, 'Great Rajah'. See, also: Veevers, *British Empire*, 79–108.

[199] Hunt and Stern, eds., *Soldier's Diary*, 12.

[200] Hunt, 'Mughal Siege', for analysis of the siege, its context, and consequences; Hunt and Stern, eds., *Soldier's Diary*, for an overview of this neglected episode in the Company's history and reproduction of James Hilton's diary of the siege and other contemporary perspectives. See, also: Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia*, 191–223, for an adjacent analysis that moors the war waged by the English in a slightly larger context, at once opening up the issue of identity and difference in Indian political affairs.

[201] See, also: Smith, *Merchants*, 147.

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the Company was well on its way to becoming the paramount power on the subcontinent, a status attained following the defeat of the Maratha armies. By that time, the Indian political landscape was marked by a higher degree of competition between a greater number of political actors, who could make use of peasants and professionals toting firearms.[204] It was in the course of the conflicts fought on Indian soil between Great Britain and France and their respective client states – not least the Carnatic Wars (1746–63), the last of which was part of the global spillover of the Seven Years' War (1756–63) – that the power of European infantries is said to have been impressed upon Indian rulers. It was many of these same Indian rulers who entered into subsidiary alliances with the Company. If this seems to vindicate that part of the larger Military Revolution thesis about an 'infantry revolution' and the decline of cavalry in the making of European states' supposedly extraordinary power, think again.

The impact of infantry across south Asia was hardly uniform, being more prevalent in the south than in the north.[205] This was not for lack of interest among north Indian rulers; European defectors helped drill and train European-style infantry regiments from Bengal to Punjab, much as they did in Nguyễn Vietnam.[206] Rather, the suitability of the landscape to cavalry and the proximity to the breeding grounds of war animals in the arid zone, the cost of modern infantry regiments (including the cost of materiel, which also gave the Europeans pause), and the flow of new technologies that supported cavalry warfare, all gave cavalry an advantage over modern infantry, as the Company was chagrined to discover when it expanded into such areas in time.[207] Priya Satia even suggests that the Mughals' focus on marksmanship influenced their Maratha rivals' and, in turn, the latter's British opponents. This is because Europeans had hitherto been focusing on improving the *rate* of fire, rather than *accuracy*. The challenge posed by the Maratha armies prompted British gunmakers and military establishments to improve guns and firing techniques.[208] Thus, not only did the military ‘revolution’ turn out to be rather protracted, rather than a decisive snap; it was perhaps also less a phenomenon and more of a process, complete with feedback loops between India and Britain. Viewing what Philip T. Hoffman unconvincingly calls Europe’s ‘comparative advantage in violence’ from an Indian standpoint helps cut the twin notions of the MR and the ‘rise of the West’ down to size.[209]

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[202] Wilson, *India Conquered*, here especially 30, 50–51.

[203] Elliott, 'Politics of Capture'.

[204] Kolff, 'Peasants', 248.

[205] See, further: Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 203–07.

[206] Chakraborty, 'Desertion'; Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. I, 426.

[207] See, for an overview and further references: Lally, *Silk Roads*, 36–40; Hoffman, 'Western Europe's Comparative Advantage', 54 and n. 46. The shock of the traditional trumping the modern worked both ways, however. At Assaye, in 1803, 'modern' Maratha infantries were defeated by 'traditional' British cavalry, as we are reminded by: Sohoni, 'Fortified Strongholds', 123.

6.5 Conclusion

Guns, much like other ‘things’ or goods, had a social life that was highly contingent on their local context; their meaning, use, and significance varied across the world, as Priya Satia reminds us.[210] Their introduction did not everywhere mean an escalation of interpersonal violence and a shift from cavalry to infantry, in part because popular understandings of such weapons were not everywhere reduced to their brute killing power. Thus, for instance, the use of firearms provided a critical military advantage in Burma and other parts of southeast Asia, facilitating the creation of larger and more centralised states. But indigenes had ‘a tendency to regard guns of imposing appearance as a source of spiritual power, regardless of how well they functioned.’[211] The role of guns as weapons largely came to an end early in the Tokugawa period, to take another example, but they obtained new meanings and ‘social lives’ in the countryside, where well-armed peasants used their guns to frighten or kill animals who might destroy their crops rather than to maim or kill their (human) enemies.[212] Guns *could* be weapons, therefore, yet also gifts, ornaments, and currency – a fact attested by the fine gun made in Tipu Sultan’s kingdom, decorated with his favoured motifs (prancing tigers, tiger patterns), and seized and sold as booty by the British following the conquest of Mysore in 1799 (Fig. 6E).

Ultimately, we know relatively little about exactly how, when, and why those Indian peasants and other groups recruited into Indian armies, or who acquired firearms some other way (for they were widely available and ranged in price more narrowly than bows), used their weapons off the campaign ground.[213] Abhishek Kaicker notes, for example, how the central Asian (Turani) retainers of Mughal grandees in Shahjahanabad mounted the rooftops and pointed down their muskets at Nadir Shah’s men as the latter plundered and killed

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[208] Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 250, 276, 286. British victory against the Marathas in 1805, furthermore, was down to the bayonet charge rather superior firepower, because the firepower of the British and their Indian rivals was at near parity; Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 295.

[209] The phrase is Hoffmamn’s; see his: ‘Western Europe’s Comparative Advantage’.

[210] Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 183–90 for the ideas and examples described in this paragraph.

[211] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 165.

[212] Howell, ‘Firearms’.

[213] On prices and availability in north and south India: Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 90.

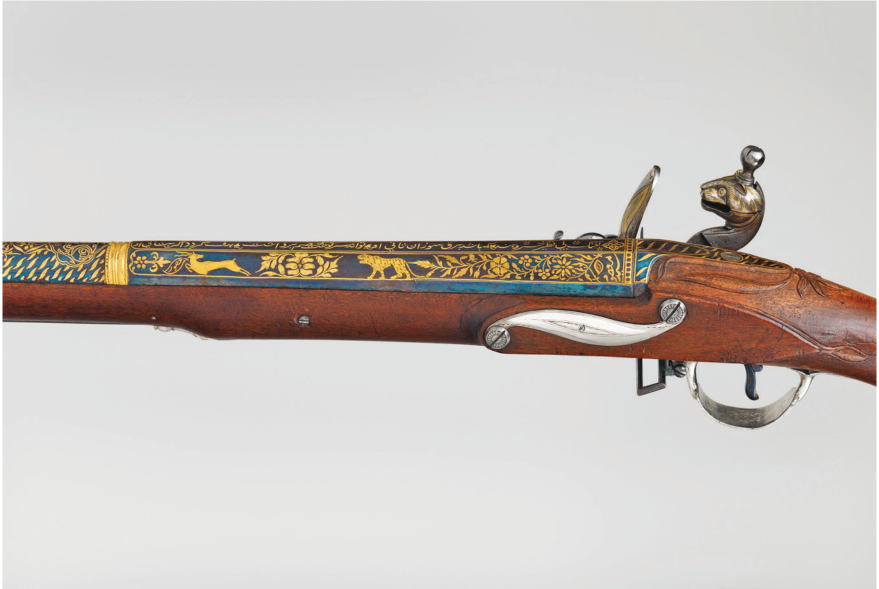

Fig. 6E Flintlock Blunderbuss from Tipu Sultan's Capital (steel, wood, gold, silver; Mysore; dated 1793/94)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 36.25.2227

in 1739, while yet other men in the city brandished mock firearms made from bamboo and iron implements; the effect was sufficient to prompt the brokering of a truce.[214] A richer picture of such quotidian recourse to firearms and their use in everyday or exceptional encounters, as in 1739, would be a welcome addition to the scholarship. In places where the honour and social prestige of mounted knights persisted, as in south Asia and west Africa, men might tote firearms even as they actually used spears or other technologies, or even combine mounted service with the use of firearms. Across significant swathes of Afro-Eurasia, the spread of artillery and infantry was even met with hostility from cavalrymen.[215] Instead of taking wholesale to the European-style infantries of the eighteenth century, therefore, a different and regionally variegated development unfolded.

By thinking about violence, rather than narrowly about military labour, we run the risk of underplaying the distinct soldiering traditions to be found in early modern Indian society – traditions that attracted men of arms to military service, cohered them as a social group in place of 'national armies', and helped channel them toward patrons to enlarge or contest a ruler's authority.[216] By the same turn, however, casting a wide-angled gaze over all those men ready to make violence, or provide their labour or other resources to that end, brings into view the range of actors upon whose energies and abilities the production of hard power rested. These included peasants from the inner frontier as well as warrior ascetics, both of whom were steadily arming themselves in this period; pastoralists, who sold their military labour and animal power in the winter campaign season; military entrepreneurs who, as clients, intermediated between these men and their own patrons; and numerous ordinary labourers and collaborators who made the progress of the war machine possible by providing their brawn or specialist knowledge. In all this, India appears broadly comparable to other parts of the world in respect of being peopled with a variety of men ready to make violence for pay and the existence of markets for violence, with marketisation deepening – rather than dissipating – through the early modern period.

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[214] Kaicker, *The King*, 40.
[215] Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms*, 6–7.

Violence was marketised to some degree in the past and remains so even today, as amply indicated by the threat in parts of the modern world posed by pirates and mercenary armies, not to mention most states' reliance on contracts with private firms for the production and delivery of weapons, warships, and tanks. The early modern period was not a clearing house in the shift from 'medieval' decentralised militaries and delegated authority to the 'modern' monopolisation of violence by increasingly centralised and powerful states. If anything, the marketisation of violence deepened in the early modern period. The rise of the European military contractor, for example, reached its high point during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), according to David Parrott. This was roughly the same time as a comparable shift toward contract armies in the Ottoman world and the career of Raja Bir Singh Deo in the Mughal Empire, which saw him monopolise north India's markets for military labour and pave the way for the *jamadars* of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That all being so, the persistence of markets for military labour and other resources requisite for the making of violence was not necessarily an obstacle to state modernisation; in some cases, this may have helped extend the state's reach where the latter might otherwise have been restrained by the limits of its expertise, credit, or capacity. And, vice versa, the fact of the state's inability to either monopolise military training or the manufacture (and use) of military technologies did not mean these remained in a backward state; the increasingly rapid circulation of printed texts, prototypes and embodied forms of information, examined in Chapter 10, indicates how readily useful knowledge travelled in the early modern world.

But we must not lose sight of the wood for the trees. Animating the entire MR debate is the relationship of war and state transformation: did war bring the strong state into being, as suggested by Parker, or did the return of absolutism after c. 1660 stimulate the most decisive phases of military transformation in the century or more that followed, as given credence by Jeremy Black and David Parrott?[217] A comparison made by Karen Barkey instructively reframes the problem in ways that make it more relevant for Indian historians. On the one hand, there were those European states more or less following the 'capitalised-coercion' path to centralisation famously posited by Charles Tilly. Having demilitarised the nobility and thereby broken its power, the English and French states' ability to make war depended on the forcible extraction of resources from peasants (coercion), which it necessarily fused with turning to merchants for finance (capital) – when faced with peasant rebellion, among other threats – in return for protection (by the state). On the other hand, there was the Ottoman state, whose centralisation was based not quite on confrontation with the nobility and peasants so much as bargaining with peasants and merchants and those deemed 'bandits' (the *celalis*, most especially), as Barkey's own work reveals.[218] The outbreak of the Celali Rebellion toward the close of the sixteenth century compelled the Ottoman state to dispatch officials to the localities to negotiate, a central principle of which was inclusion; by presenting itself as the sole centre for rewards and privileges, and distributing these as the fruits of bargains struck via negotiation, the process actually deepened centralisation.[219] Thus, for instance, one *celali* chieftain famously wrote to the sultan promising 'more than 16,000 soldiers in return for fourteen high-level administrative positions for himself and his lieutenants.'[220] In this light, those debates concerning the relationship of centralisation to war (or vice versa) appear to be drawn from the limited field of western European history as much as they are limiting; other paths to centralisation *were* possible.

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[216] On the traditions and identities formed around soldiering and military service (*naukari*) which undeniably had a bearing on matters of recruitment and reward, see Kolff's path-breaking, *Naukar*, especially 71–199. See, also: Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics*.

What, then, of India, where society was not as corporate as in western Europe, but where power revolved around the distribution/accumulation of rights, like in the Ottoman Empire? Were bandits incorporated as state functionaries? The phenomenon of social banditry has not been the subject of rich social histories, perhaps because of the absence of trial records and other sources containing bandits' testimony that have provided rich rewards for European and east Asian historians. The only sustained analysis of premodern banditry focuses on a figure named Papadu.

A sometime south Indian toddy-tapper, Papadu's audacious raids provided plunder, cash, and cattle. These were not mindless acts or villainy, for some of the less liquid booty (such as goods and carpets) served as currency for the purchase of more immediately necessary goods and provisions (European muskets, for instance), while the rest supported capital accumulation of sorts. His seizure of 10,000 to 12,000 cattle from a caravan of Banjaras passing by his purview was, Richard Eaton believes, put to the service of the plough. Papadu and his supporters thus brought land under cultivation, perhaps waste or forest previously not used as arable, indicating the ultimate identity he wished to fashion for himself was as a member of the landed gentry.[221] Here, then, we see evidence of the lure and reach of commercialisation examined in the previous chapter and, to preview ideas described in the next, the aspiration for *zamindari* right. Such aspirations were recognised by the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707–12), but Papadu rapidly fell from grace to be executed, his body dismembered so it could be displayed as a warning across the Mughal domains.

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[217] For analysis speaking to the latter proposition, see also: Braddick, *State Formation*, 177–86.

[218] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 55–84, for analysis of why the prebendal elites were unable and unwilling to seriously oppose the Ottoman centre, occasionally rebelling but only to demand deeper incorporation into the state and its structure of privileges (even as the outcome was in some cases to make them more autonomous, with their own sources of income and their own armies), and seldom seeking to usurp the ruling dynasty.

[219] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 13. See, also: White, *Climate of Rebellion*, 163–226.

[220] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 190.

In many ways a singular example, Papadu's incorporation by the state is nevertheless in tune with the more general strategy toward those individuals or groups – including hostile zamindars – that the Mughal state cast as rebels. Take, for instance, the history of the Roshaniya, which exemplifies many of the points made in this chapter about the links between violence, faith, commerce, and animal power, while also revealing how the Mughal state dealt with pockets of resistance. The Roshaniya was a heterodox movement founded in the sixteenth century by Bayazid Ansari, the Pir Roshan ('enlightened one'). Bayazid followed in his father's footsteps by plying the Indo-Afghan horse trade; had exposed himself to the teachings of Hindu yogis and Sufis as he moved between far-flung locales as a dealer; and then amassed a following, subsequently dispatching his disciples as missionaries to places within the ambit of the horse trade network – Delhi, Balkh, and Bukhara, for instance.[222] Bayazid's great success was his following amongst the Yusufzai rank and file, no matter that he was not a Pashtun or Afghan himself. They responded to the Mughal intrusion in the Peshawar valley by rallying behind Bayazid and his descendants, who possessed a charisma that helped unite a number of otherwise conflicting Pashtun lineages or tribes.[223] But the Roshaniya had less traction amongst the tribal elite, so that – while Bayazid's successor began calling himself the *badshah-i afghanan* (king of the Afghans) as he demanded tribute from Yusufzai landholders – the movement in fact alienated local powerholders.[224]

In the 1580s, appealing to the millenarian fervour of the times (§3.3.5), the Roshaniya leadership launched an anti-Mughal campaign, for Akbar had ordered the building of forts and the forging of local alliances to support his consolidation and deepening control of the Kabul province of the Mughal Empire.[225] A *farman* (decree) of 1588 granted to Muhammad Khan of Hoti – a descendant of Babur's sometime ally during the conquest of north India in 1526 – the rights to collect land revenues (*malguzari*) from the area inhabited by the Yusufzai tribes and appointed him the local leader, all in return for his subordination of the restive Yusufzais under the spell of the Roshaniya.[226] In the long-term, the result was the establishment of patron-client relations between the Mughals and their allies in the tribal elite, on the one hand, and the growth of competition (and resentment) between the imperially-appointed rulers and the inhabitants of the area, especially more marginal tribes, on the other, thereby fracturing interests into bitter rivalries over rights to land and its resources and revenues. When the tribes revolted in 1667, for instance, the efforts of the Mughals 'to blame trouble on individual "rebels" and deceitful religious charlatans, rather than on generalized unrest caused by unwanted interference, was [part of] a recurring response to instability'.[227] We might, therefore, question the durability of imperial strategies of control centred on the distribution of prebends.

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[221] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 155–76. On the 'intriangulateable' gap between popular memory and folk tales as indicators of intentions and identities, and the historical record written from opponents' perspectives, see: Richards and Rao, 'Banditry', 114–20, and *passim*, for the history of Papadu.

[222] Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 110.

[223] Nichols, *Settling the Frontier*, 10.

[224] Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 111.

All this suggests the Mughal path to centralisation was like that taken by the Ottomans. At the same time, a key difference between the Mughal and Ottoman states was the former's rapid and terminal fragmentation starting around the close of the seventeenth century, during Papadu's lifetime. This makes the discussion about the relationship of war and violence to state centralisation or modernisation rather moot, at least in the Indian case.[228] Yet, the very fact of the empire's collapse at the peak of its centralisation forces us to examine the nature and workings of the Mughal state, its institutions, and their role in so-called 'decline'. Was the demise of the Mughal Empire because of, or in spite of, the particular nature of its centralising institutions and strategies of imperial control? This is among the subjects of the next chapter.

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[225] Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 135.

[226] Nichols, *Settling the Frontier*, 12.

[227] Ibid, 37.

[228] Whether or not the Mughal state could have survived into the modern period to then 're-centralise' – like its Ottoman counterpart – were it not for the East India Company's takeover from 1757 can only be a matter of speculation, and certainly one outside the scope of this book.

7 The State

Statecraft was the subject of a highly diverse body of literature in south Asia. The corpus' origins lay in such ancient texts as the *Arthashastra*, and blossomed in the Middle Ages to 'range from grandiose imperial ideological statements to recipes for the survival of small kingdoms that are squeezed between massive rivals'.[1] If anything unified these works, it was a pervading belief that states existed to 'manage social conflict' – the only legitimate reason for the levying and collection of taxes from subjects.[2] Authorship, too, became more varied. Take a Telugu-language work known as the *Amuktamalyada* ('The Woman Who Wears a Garland Already Worn'), composed by the Vijayanagara emperor, Krishnadeva Raya (r. 1509–29). The advice portion of the text is framed by a discussion depicting the king at once as a warrior, protector, and patron of Brahmans, and as a connoisseur of poetry and drama. Krishnadeva Raya synthesised Indic, Islamicate, and Persianate sources of wisdom on statecraft to produce what some modern commentators call 'a unique concoction of pragmatic wisdom, specific constraints, an inherited normative politics, and a meditative sensibility capable of formulating something entirely new.'[3]

Through what concepts did early modern Indo-Muslim rulers, such as the Mughals, describe and understand power and politics? The languages of political Islam, Muzaffar Alam argues, had to be adapted as they were translated from the Arabo-Persian world, where Muslim rulers held sway over largely Muslim populations, to India, where Islam was a minority religion.[4] Among the texts connected to this development were ethical treatises or works of *akhlaq*, which outlined the proper qualities of those individuals – including the king – involved in government; advice (*nasihat*) literature, which was frequently topical, addressing issues or deficiencies in government at the time; and manuals (*dasturs*) written for a range of different types of functionaries in the

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[1] Narayana Rao *et al*, 'New Imperial Idiom', 70.

[2] Ibid, 70.

[3] Ibid, 80.

[4] Alam, *Languages*.

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regime (e.g., bureaucrats, accountants).[5] Already underway in the Middle Ages following the creation of the Delhi Sultanate, political Islam was transforming to fit the Indian context as it also spread further afield in Mughal times. This was increasingly a two-way process, not least as a growing Indian audience exerted their influence upon these political languages, in turn.

Yet, before proceeding, it is worth briefly stating that the political wisdom contained in these texts was not so idiosyncratic to the Indic or larger Islamicate worlds as to be alien and incommensurable to readers from other ecumenes. A Jesuit, for instance, penned a text for Jahangir in 1609 akin to a mirror-for-princes. Mirrors texts were common enough in early modern Europe; Erasmus (1466–1536) and Machiavelli (1469–1527) penned works in this well-established genre, for instance. Mughal and Ottoman writers were certainly familiar with an analogous genre (§7.2.3): Babur's autobiography has been described as a kind of 'mirror for Timurid princes', while Ottoman writers started churning out mirrors-type works from the later sixteenth century.[6] Only very recently discovered and analysed, the Jesuit *padre's* work was hardly unusual, therefore, and yet its structure was remarkable in one respect: it follows Timurid and Indo-Persian exemplars – rather than any from Europe, such as Erasmus' – even as Biblical and Western Classical references are used in place of Sassanian and Islamic(ate) ones.[7] Overall, it stands as an example of cross-cultural exchange and hybridity.

Not only did a range of political concepts have currency, but their meanings and valence were unstable and liable to change, especially given greater cross-cultural exchange. Consider the term *saltanat* (sultanate): 'depending on context,' Nicholas J. Abbott summarises, this could 'denote royal power or sovereign authority ("kingship"); institutions and individuals through which that power was projected; and the territory over which a king or emperor ruled (his "kingdom" or "empire").'[8] By the late Middle Ages, thanks to Mongol rule, *saltanat* had blurred with *khilafat*, the latter initially referring to a Muslim ruler's succession to the Prophet's political authority as caliph or leader of the caliphate. By the dawn of the early modern period, sultanic kingship 'drew from idioms of Sufi preceptorship, Perso-Islamic royal justice, and the Turko-Mongol sovereign as dynastic law-giver'.[9] But the concept did not stand still. With the direct control of territory by the Mughal ruler steadily shrinking in the eighteenth century, the notion of Mughal universal sovereignty (§8.4) seemed hollow, so that Mughal power was described in qualified 'territorial terms as "the saltanat of Hindustan" (*saltanat-i hindustan*)'.[10] One further dimension of *saltanat* was its use to capture 'a corporate body and institutional structure' – that is, the state as a house inhabited by numerous individuals, whose actions constituted government, and laid on the foundations of various governance institutions.[11] This dimension of *saltanat*'s usage also morphed as the Mughals' fortunes were altered in the eighteenth century, with some seeing new competitors to political authority as sinister agents, while others painted themselves as rescuing the house from dilapidation.[12]

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[5] Sood, 'Art of Governance', 261, and *passim*, for a comparison of a Mughal and an Ottoman example of advice literature. Haider, 'Accountancy Manuals', for a guide to such texts and their readers. See, also: Howard, 'Ottoman Advice'.

[6] Dale, *Babur*, 6–7.

[7] Lèfevre, 'Circulation', 131–37. A book of didactic poetry penned by a Mughal poet and noble, Mirza Khanjar Beg, has very recently been interpreted as a kind of mirrors text intended for Akbar, even though it is not of the mirrors genre proper, suggesting the range of ways elites guided – and much more seldomly, dared to directly criticise – emperor and state; see: Haque, 'Advice Literature'.

[8] Abbott, 'Mulk', 477.

[9] Ibid, 477.

To *saltanat* can be added *daulat*, a term often taken to mean government or state, and sometimes wealth or felicity, and which held currency across the Indo-Islamicate world.[13] These and other concepts (*mulk*, *riyasat*, *sarkar*) describe power and territorial right, but where do the people – as subjects – fit in?[14] 'Sovereignty', Abhishek Kaicker observes, 'finds no direct coeval or parallel in Mughal intellectual culture, where no equivalent term merited similar theoretical discussion.'[15] From the perspective of Mughal ideologues, 'the relationship between the king and his subjects was essentially one of pastoral care', with the people figuring as 'the passive objects of governance'.[16] Within this framework, the Mughals saw differences of opinion or dissent as the 'conflict (*fitna*) and corruption (*fasad*) of rebels (*mufsidan*)', and its 'primary impulse in responding to those who "raised their heads" (*sar-kashi*) in rebellion was to detach them from their bodies', though clemency and conciliation were often the order of the day, for 'tyranny (*zulm*) and oppression (*taʿaddi*) – the very opposite of justice – delegitimised the ruler.'[17] We have seen, nonetheless, how the people of Shahjahanabad found their voice, developed their own conceptions of sovereignty, and rallied around their king in 1739 – a development that began to flower, in a cruel irony, in the Mughal Empire's twilight.

The history of political thought is a small yet steadily developing sub-field in the history of early modern India, with the scholarship cited above being good examples of its output. This chapter, however, focuses not on political ideas but on the nature and evolution of the state, and focuses on the Mughal state in particular. Its students remain lavished by an embarrassment of riches compared to those of the Vijayanagara Empire, the Delhi or Deccan sultanates, and the Maratha state – and this in spite of new pockets of research on each of these polities. In their extensive survey of Mughal historiography, first published in 1998, Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam urge us to ponder what exactly the 'Mughal state' was – perhaps a Leviathan, or little more than a paper tiger, an '[i]nexorable instrument of political and fiscal centralisation, or mere carapace'.[18] In their own and rather oblique response to this problem, they emphasise two things. First, spatial diversity, so that 'adjustment to local conditions' meant 'the state eventually resembled a "patchwork quilt" rather than a "wall-to-wall carpet".'[19] Second, historical change, for imperial rule (in terms of its institutions, technologies, practices, ideologies) had not been concretised by the end of Akbar's reign, but naturally continued to develop as a 'process'.[20] In light of work published in the past thirty years, our understanding has only become more complex. It now seems like the Mughal state was somewhere between the poles set out by Alam and Subrahamanyam, yet also that these extremes of Leviathan vs. paper tiger hardly do it justice and straitjacket its analysis.

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[10] Ibid, 478.

[11] Ibid, 479.

[12] Ibid, 479.

[13] Sood, 'Art of Governance', 265.

[14] Abbott, 'Mulk', 480–85 on *sarkar*, as well as *riyasat* and *mulk*, and their appropriation – and shifting meaning – in the hands of provincial governors as they gained local autonomy when Mughal central control weakened during the eighteenth century.

[15] Kaicker, *The King*, 7.

[16] Ibid, 149. See, also: Sood, 'Art of Governance', for evidence from Mughal and Ottoman sources claiming that the population at large did not have what it takes to participate in sovereign governance.

[17] Kaicker, *The King*, 149 and 150, for respective citations.

This chapter studies power from the process of conquest and the first and rather fragile decades of Timurid-Mughal rule, through to the consolidation of state authority, from the 'mature' centralised imperial polity, through to the era of decentralisation and 'decline'. It looks at institutions but also at processes (e.g., bargaining), and ranges from the Marxist analysis of the so-called Aligarh historians to Weberian ideas to the impact of the Foucauldian turn.[21] With our focus resting primarily on the Mughal state, something must be said for the generalisability of the northern experience to the south at the outset.[22] Against the predominant picture of a Mughal state possessed with coercive power and exhibiting a high degree of fiscal-military centralisation, Burton Stein utilised the model of the 'segmentary state' to characterise the state in the Deccan, where the allegiances between a tiny centrally administered core and its nominally-held provinces were basically ritual rather than fiscal in nature.[23] As will become clear in this chapter, the older view of the all-powerful Mughal state has been significantly revised. At the same time, a number of historians have identified similar institutions in the Deccan plateau to those extant in the north (e.g., *inam*), not to mention the gradual blending of north and south through the process of imperial conquest and inter-imperial exchange and mimesis, even as the early modern Deccan could only play home to 'non-imperial states'.[24] Another distinction has been drawn between the small, coastal, trade-based states and the large, 'hydraulic' (i.e., irrigated), agrarian-based states of the interior, the former sadly remaining fairly marginal in much of the literature.[25] Again, this distinction has been softened, not least by historians who have brought to light those 'portfolio capitalists' whose fields of activity knitted trade at various scales (including maritime trade) with property in prime agricultural land.[26] Without flattening India's regional diversity and the variety of state forms, therefore, we might usefully take from Mughal history certain ideas or hypotheses to the study of those states that have received relatively less scholarly attention.

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[18] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 2.

[19] Ibid, 57.

[20] This cue comes from: Subrahmanyam, 'Structure or Process'.

[21] For a guide to Mughal historiography and an introduction to the 'Aligarh school', see: Subrahmanyam, 'Structure or Process', especially 293–96. On Foucault's impact, see: Hasan, *State and Locality*, 7.

[22] Adjacently, Kumar, 'Delhi Sultanate', makes the case for 'empire' as a category relevant to the pre-Mughal north, even if empire was of a very different sort.

[23] Stein, *Vijayanagara*, 62, for definition of the concept, and *passim*.

7.1 The Sinews of the State: The *Mansabdari-Jagirdari* System

7.1.1 Dividing the Spoils of Empire: From Ulus *to* Jagir

The 'problem of imperial relatives' plagued most premodern dynasts. These unwelcome or unwanted family members and would-be pretenders to the throne could be excluded from political and economic life by forcing their seclusion in, say, the palace compound, as was the fate of relations of the Ming emperors of China. Alternately, they could be neutered through their transformation into bureaucrats responsible for the running of the central administration in return for ranks and honours, even as they were barred from acting independently as local rulers, as was the case in the Russian and Qing empires.[27] Another tact was to satisfy their hunger for riches or status through the grant of a provincial appanage and thereby remove them to a safe distance, or else award them responsibility for the conquest and administration of outlying regions, perhaps even the frontier. What of the Mughal dynasts and their relatives?

In the first decades after Babur's conquest in 1526, the nascent Mughal state was incredibly fragile. In part, this was because he had to win the support of local elites by appealing to their particular ideas about royalty, as well as their sensibilities concerning his Timurid heritage (§8.1). In part, the scion of the Mughal house faced the upset and difficulties that came with sharing his sovereignty, for he was seen by his own family members as merely the first among equals, as per central Asian tradition, if not actually looked down upon by certain Turani aristocratic lineages.[28] Like the Lodi sultans, the predominant strategy in the early Mughal state involved dividing newly conquered land among the ruler's followers in a fairly egalitarian manner, each holding their share as a princely appanage (*ulus*). Thus, Timurid princes – not only Babur's sons, but also his brothers, cousins, uncles, nephews – abounded in the new conquest state, each lurking in his appanage, where they were free to build up horizontal alliances with other powerholders (e.g., other family members, the leaders of pastoral tribes, warlords and military jobbers, etc) and thereby potentially contest Babur or Humayun's claims to the throne. This persisted until the 1580s when, under Akbar, the appanage system was abolished, ending what Munis Faruqui calls a 'corporate-style clan dynasty'.[29]

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[24] On this last idea, see: Fischel, *State and Locality*.

[25] See, however: Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions*, especially 94–185.

[26] Subrahmanyam, 'State Formation', opens-up all of the issues described in this paragraph.

[27] Keliher, 'Problem'.

[28] Anooshahr, 'Mongrels'.

Thereafter, all family members were given a (transferable) *jagir*, so that they became responsible for imperial administration. Because only the emperor and his sons and grandsons were granted the largest *jagirs*, other family members lacked the financial resources to contest the reigning sovereign's authority. The system became more limited in that the pool of candidates was carefully limited to the emperor's direct male progeny.[30] The system remained open-ended in a vital respect, however, for succession was not governed by the rule of primogeniture but by tanistry. Imperial succession was the outcome of a *successful* rebellion against the reigning emperor (e.g., Prince Khurram's successful rebellion against Jahangir and his coronation as Shah Jahan) or those wars of succession fought by brothers around the time of the emperor's demise (e.g., the one fought by Aurangzeb against his four brothers, in which he defeated the favourite, Dara Shukoh).[31] Guided by the pithy maxim '*ya takht, ya tabut*' ('either the throne or the grave'), the emperor's sons and grandsons spent their childhoods learning to be princes, before reaching their majority and immediately launching their political careers via the building-up of their households-cum-headquarters and the brokering of alliances with powerful supporters, all in preparation of the inevitable fight for life and for the throne that was to come, and to which we shall return (§7.3.1).[32]

A legacy of the Mughals' central Asian heritage, the *ulus*-system was only one way of dividing the spoils of conquest. Among the other legacies of Turko-Mongolic empire were decimal systems of military-political organisation, though these could also be found in southeast Asia, which had been left untouched by the likes of Chinggis Khan and Timur.[33] A closely related feature of the Timurids' nomadic inheritance was the central role retained by warhorses 'in the political organization of the great empires that bordered on the pastoral heartlands' until the nineteenth century.[34] Jos Gommans highlights how this shaped post-nomadic political culture in those polities around, and with origins in, the arid steppe and its pastoral economy – such as the Mughal and Qing empires – where a roving military camp (*ordo*), a cavalry horse-based system of civil-military government, and the support of the latter through distribution of the spoils of empire were its central features long after the conquest of zones of sedentary cultivation and rain-fed agriculture.[35] On such a system, the spoils were distributed through the award of prebendal rights to land revenues, which were tied to *jagirs* in Mughal India following Akbar's reforms, *tiyul* in the Safavid polity, and in the Ottoman world to *timar*.[36] One's rank determined the size of the award; higher-ranked family members or imperial servicemen received a larger *jagir* or *timar* that brought in a greater income but also came with the responsibility of recruiting and maintaining a higher number of cavalrymen and horses.

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[29] Faruqui, *Princes*, 20, for citation, and 24–65, for analysis. See, also: Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity*, 100–39.

[30] On the role of female progeny in this process: Faruqui, *Princes*, 38.

[31] Ibid, especially 181–273.

[32] Faruqui, *Princes*, 7, for the alternate phrase '*ya takht, ya takhta*' ('either the throne, or the bier').

[33] Scott, *Art*, 68.

[34] Gommans, 'Post-Nomadic Empire', 1.

The *ulus*-system left individuals relatively free to form horizontal alliances with other nobles, potentially stirring competition for the throne. Against this, decimal systems of military-political organisation revolved around the centre's employment of militarised gentry and military entrepreneurs, their granting of a rank to correspond to their status, and their subordination to the crown. The system established vertical bonds of reward and loyalty forged between emperor and rank-holders – and the complete exclusion of those without rank. Given many of their founders' origins in central Asia, it is unsurprising that horse-based decimal systems of administration were extant in the Delhi Sultanates. Despite the prevalence of the system of princely appanage in the early Mughal period, even Babur and Humayun made some limited use of horse-based decimal systems.[37] Their efficacy was highlighted during the interregnum in Mughal rule, when Sher Shah Suri (r. 1537–45) and his descendants briefly ruled north India while Humayun was in exile at the Safavid court. The changes Sher Shah made to extant models of rank and reward foreshadowed those introduced during Akbar's reign, the latter giving rise to what is known as the *mansabdari* system.[38] How, then, did the *mansabdari* system work and wherein lay its novelty and genius?

7.1.2 Prebendal Rights, Imperial Ranks, and the Mansbadari

Found across the Islamic world, the Arabic term *iqta* denoted land granted by a sovereign. It gradually came to signify revenue assignments connected to land by the Delhi Sultanate period, and in this latter sense became synonymous with *jagir* in the Mughal Empire.[39] Though our focus is on the north, it is worth mentioning that a corresponding system prevailed in the south. This was the grant of transferable revenue assignments known as *nayamkara* that supported the *nayaka* lords of the Vijayanagara Empire, this system resembling the Mughal *mansabdari-jagirdari*.[40] In the Mughal system, the emperor granted the revenues of an area (i.e., the *jagir*) to an individual known as the *jagirdar* or *iqtadar*. All imperial servicemen held *jagirs*, so that the *mansabdars* were also *jagirdars*, but some *jagirdars* did not hold imperial ranks (*mansabs*) and therefore did not give service in return for their revenue assignments. Areas that had not been assigned were designated as *paibaqi*, while those that formed the Crown Estate – their revenues flowing directly to the imperial treasury – were termed *khalisa*, which represented an estimated 13.6 per cent of the total land revenue of the Mughal Empire in 1647.[41] Assignees were entitled to collect for themselves the entire revenue (*mal*) owed to the sovereign of the designated territory, comprising revenue from the land taxes but also a range of rural taxes or cesses.[42] Urban marketplaces might be so valuable that they were designated as separate entities before being assigned as *jagirs*. The market dues from Hansi and Hisar – in the vicinity of Delhi – were part of the *khalisa*, for example, while the surrounding *parganas* were assigned as *jagirs*.[43]

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Tekgul, 'Ottoman Timariots', 595.

[37] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 38–39.

[38] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 19–21 usefully summarises Sher Shah's many other innovations, although they also draw our attention to the reliance on a single source whose author had much to gain by presenting the erstwhile ruler in a positive light.

[39] In another sense, *iqta* denoted revenue farms. See: Sheth, 'Revenue Farming Reconsidered', for a useful delineation of the concept and its differing means.

A *mansabdar* (holder of a *mansab* or rank) was granted his rank and designated a *zat* and *sawar* locating his place within the official hierarchy. His *zat* indicated status and pay, whereas his *sawar* stipulated the size of the military contingent (cavalrymen) he was required to maintain.[44] His emoluments were received either in cash from the treasury or, more commonly, derived from his *jagir*. Having said that, there were several reasons why the centre had to pay servicemen a cash salary (*naqdi*) or advance cash loans against expected prebendal income, to the extent the procedure became systematised in both the Mughal and Ottoman empires.[45] In return for all this, the serviceman submitted to a master-slave relationship, for the *mansabdari* was not merely some abstract or impersonal military-administrative institution, but part of the reformulation of affective ties between emperor and nobles and thus a daily instantiation of imperial power and Mughal ideology.[46] It may have been unattractive to the central Asian nobles who sought a more egalitarian division of the spoils, but their power was precisely what the emperor sought to break in the later sixteenth century, whereas Persian Shiʿis in Humayun's and thus Akbar's elite were supposedly more amenable to such a hierarchical arrangement of authority.[47] It was also a means of incorporating more local elites (e.g., Rajputs), while a system rewarding loyalty with an elevation of rank helped dilute the power of unruly individuals or groups.

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[40] Palat, *Indian Ocean World-Economy*, 108; Asher and Talbot, *India*, 68.

[41] Habib, 'Capitalistic Development', 39.

[42] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 81–83.

[43] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 299–301.

[44] For the reformulation under Akbar and subsequent changes instituted by Jahangir and Shah Jahan, see: Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 39–49.

[45] See: Habib, *Agrarian System*, 306–10; Tekgul, 'Ottoman Timariots'.

[46] Richards, 'Imperial Authority'.

[47] Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 18–19.

The *mansabdari* was ultimately designed to strengthen the emperor's control. Its very creation involved the transfer of all land to the state, even land that would be granted (or confirmed) as the *watan jagirs* of hereditary zamindars and rajas. In this way, the dispensation of rewards – namely, land revenues – was the perquisite of the king and tied to meritorious service and loyalty. Rolling out the *mansabdari-jagirdari* system involved the flattening of local traditions of landlordism and military service. These were most distinct in the regions farthest from the empire's agrarian heartland, such as the *paik* system in Assam and Kuch Bihar (basically a form of military corvée taken by local elites from peasants). Rebellion thus attended the 'intrusion' of imperial expansion and consolidation in such areas, its suppression a necessary step in the process of centralising power relations and subordinating local potentates to the hierarchically organised structure of the Mughal state.[48] From the centre's perspective, it was better to offer vanquished leaders a share of the spoils through imperial service, and thereby incorporate them into the state structure as known and controllable entities, than to mercilessly try and eliminate them altogether or allow them to remain outside the state system like unpredictable and dangerous free radicals.[49] At the same time, their violent potential was valuable, if usefully channelled into good use, so that the *mansabdari* was also an instrument by which to 'turn the noble savages of the *mawas* [rebellious areas] into the savage nobles of the empire.'[50]

A great deal of complexity was involved in distributing and redistributing *jagirs* in such a way as to ensure stability, for not all land was alike. Some areas were described as *mawas* or *zor-talab* (rebellious), unlike the *raiyati* or revenue-paying villages. Such places formed an excellent base for raids into areas of settled cultivation by so-called predatory groups: the Meos in the hills in Mewat or the Dogars and Gujjars of the shifting marsh and forest around the Lakhi Jungle, but also the Koli peasants in Gujarat, to mention but a few examples.[51] Only the elite servicemen – whose higher-rank denoted their military and leadership skills – were assigned to such *jagirs*, with lower-ranking servicemen assigned *jagirs* in *raiyati* areas.[52] Within this framework, a practice developed from 1568 onward whereby *jagirdars* were routinely dislodged from their assignment and given a new *jagir* of corresponding value, so that a defining feature of the *mansabdari-jagirdari* system was that assignments were transferable and non-hereditary, with the notable exception of *watan jagirs*.[53]

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[48] Bhadra, 'Frontier Uprisings', especially 481–90.

[49] For a careful reading of the (complex) perspectives of the vanquished or their descendants: Talbot, 'Justifying Defeat'.

[50] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 99.

[51] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 398–99.

[52] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 79.

[53] The exception was the *watan jagirs* held by certain *zamindars* (see: §5.1.2), such as the Rajput chiefs, which were non-transferable and hereditary.

The intention was to preclude the accumulation of local landed power and its resources and, therefore, to limit rebellion. There is scattered evidence of reassignments as frequent as every 1.7 to 3.5 years across the reigns of Akbar to Shah Jahan in areas as close to the capital as Vrindaban or as distant as Bhakkar (Multan *suba*), Sehwan (Sindh), and Indur (Telangana).[54] There is also scattered evidence of the slowing down or even the cessation of regular transfers toward the end of the classical age – though this has been hotly contested.[55] Whatever happened at the level of the *jagirdar* belies another underlying process by which those who came forward to offer to collect the *jagirdar's* revenues were often able to pass the baton to their own heirs, so that the connection between land, cash, and power *did* become hereditary at a lower level of society, if not at the regional level, too.[56]

To speak of the Mughal 'nobility', M. Athar Ali reminds us, is a slight misnomer. The *umara* (pl. of *amir* or noble) did not for the most part form a hereditary nobility, as in Europe, but was largely the creation of the Mughal sovereign and defined solely by holding the higher ranks (*mansabs*) of 1000 or more.[57] They were a motley bunch, their diversity – in terms of regional, religious, clan, lineage, or other markers of 'ethnic' identity – richly described and celebrated in a passage by Chandar Bhan Brahman.[58] Among the larger groupings were Uzbeks (Turanis), Iranians, and Afghans, Indian Hindus and Muslims (both Sunnis and Shi'is).[59] The most highly skilled were usually away at an official posting and seldom recalled to court unless necessary. Others were a sort of reserve force, so they were not necessarily the dross of the *mansabdari*.[60] Accepting a *mansab* meant being willing to be deployed in a military campaign at a moment's notice or being posted to a faraway province (as a *subadar* or governor), although only first-tier *mansabdars* were posted to Kabul, Gujarat, or Bengal, while those of the second tier became governors of Kashmir or Ajmer.[61] A *mansabdar's* incentive was the riches brought by imperial service, a fact that inspired the migration of Iranians through the seventeenth century, when the Safavid economy was especially troubled.[62] That said, entry into service required the backing of a high-ranking patron at court; the possession of sufficient starting capital – borrowed from a moneylender where not readily available – to offer tribute or pay surety to the emperor; and the perseverance with a fairly bureaucratised process of recruitment. The greater the patron's clout, and the denser the candidate's networks of clients and the deeper his pools of recruitment, the more likely he was of success.[63]

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[54] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 301–02.

[55] See: Richards, 'Imperial Crisis', 242, 252; Habib, 'Eighteenth Century', 74, n. 7, for citations reflecting both sides of the debate. See, also: Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, xx.

[56] Raychaudhuri, 'Agrarian System', 269–73; Alam, *Crisis*, 31.

[57] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 2–3, where he also discusses his debt to the work of the colonial Indologist, W.H. Moreland.

[58] Too long to reproduce here, it can be found in: Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 15, while 11–37 gives wider insight into the precise composition and its change over time.

[59] Dayal, '"Mughal" Soldier', especially 888–99.

[60] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 136–37.

[61] Ibid, 146–48, where the posts of *faujdar* and *thanadar* and their connection to particular ranks– depending upon the location – is also discussed.

[62] Flatt, *Living Well*, 74–119; Subrahmanyam, 'Iranians Abroad'.

The system was predicated on the centre possessing a clear and reliable sense of the fiscal yield of each *jagir*, necessitating its assessment of each unit of territory to prepare what was known as the *jama*. The *jama* did not accord perfectly with actual collection (*hasil*), so one objective was to improve information about each unit to ensure the *jama* was not set too high or too low, while another was to fine-tune the institutional architecture to suppress discrepancies arising from official corruption. Akbar inherited figures from Babur's reign that turned out to be fairly inflated, necessitating consultations with knowledgeable record-keepers at the very local level and, eventually, entirely new cadastral surveys from 1560, which saw the careful assessment of the land – its size, its yield – according to newly standardised measures.[64]

Overall, this interlocking system at the local level was part of the larger, interlocking, and hierarchically stacked revenue-bureaucratic apparatus of empire.[65] The *parganas* were organised into districts (*sarkars*) and these into the provinces (*subas*) of the empire. The *suba* had its own administration corresponding to that of the centre: it was governed by a *subadar*, who reported to the emperor, and shared power with a *diwan* (revenue officer), who reported to the *wazir*. The *faujdars* represented a kind of military and police power; their coercive force was mobilised in support of the functioning of this apparatus.[66] At the heart of these overlapping and interlocking arrangements were checks and balances on governors' or other officeholders' powers. A similar gubernatorial system developed a little later in the Restored Toungoo Empire in the seventeenth century, although the requirement to reside at court substituted regular transfers from post to post as the main prophylactic against insubordination, much as in contemporary Russia, France, and Japan.[67] Yet, as André Wink reminds us, the Mughal system was 'ramshackle' at best, a significant improvement on its predecessors but often quite inefficient, with functionaries not always operating as their masters might like and with new surveys commissioned only when it was found that yield was much higher than understood, so we should not overstate Mughal fiscal-administrative might, as later sections of this chapter also make clear.[68]

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[63] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 84, 89, 94–96.

[64] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 303–07.

[65] Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 58–93.

[66] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 318–49. See, for a look at the *faujdari* and the functions performed by officers: Siddiqi, '*Faujdar*'.

[67] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 161–62. Note: the First Toungoo Dynasty witnessed an expansion roughly contemporaneous to that under Akbar: *op. cit.*, 151–52.

[68] Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 191–92.

7.1.3 The **Mansabdari** *in Explanations of Mughal Expansion and Decline*

Viewed through the lens of the *mansabdari-jagirdari* system, and from the perspective of those writers stationed in the imperial centre, the Mughal Empire appears as a hierarchically organised state staffed by a correspondingly finely graded hierarchy of servicemen, with crisp vertical lines of authority from the imperial centre down to the lowest level of the village circle. Interlocking with military and civil administration and revenue management, the *mansabdari-jagirdari* system was the empire's preeminent institution of governance, while incorporation – of land and landholders – into the system was part of the very process of post-conquest pacification, consolidation, and control of opponents. Institutions were thus the bedrock of the Mughal centre's hegemony, while established schemes of reward (and punishment, less commonly) incentivised deference to the emperor above all, and certainly above the formation of horizontal networks or groupings to mount a *coup d'etat*. How, then, to explain imperial collapse? Might this to be located in either institutional maldesign, malfunction, or breakdown?

In his seminal work of the mid-twentieth century, Irfan Habib analyses the Mughal state through a Marxist frame, focusing on economic institutions – namely, the *jagirdari* system.[69] In his view, the Mughal state was essentially feudal, highly centralised, and capable of expropriating most of the peasant surplus through its revenue-bureaucratic institutions. Habib viewed the underlying logic of regular transfers of *jagirs* as sound, but the system was neither foolproof nor free of adverse effects. Regular transfers disincentivised investment in the locality of the sort that would lead to long-term gains and, to the contrary, incentivised *jagirdars* and their agents to bleed the land and its people dry by levying additional cesses, bribing the *qanungos* to buy their silence as revenue was extracted in excess of the *jama*, and so forth.[70] The higher-ranking *jagirdars'* frequent posting to other areas and departure to distant campaign grounds meant it was easy to neglect affairs in their *jagirs* and the proper execution of work by their charges.[71]

By this account, the *jagirdari* system was inherently unstable, for the extent of surplus extraction, combined with the *jagirdars'* and other officials' strong incentive to abuse their offices, whether by neglect or by design, meant that 'class conflict' between the peasants and the state was inevitable. True, peasant revolt against taxes and other expropriation by the centre was not new in the Mughal period, for it was a persistent feature of state-society relations.[72] Those peasants who 'were protected in some measure by ravines or forests or hills,' Habib writes, prefiguring yet also subverting James C. Scott's famous arguments about Zomia, 'were more likely to defy the authorities than those in the open plains.'[73] These were the areas described as *mawas* or *zor-talab*. Of course, this was merely the view of a centralised state, and the situation looked different from the vantage point of indigenes themselves. The Bhils, for instance, had not 'retreated' to the forest of the western Deccan to escape the state so much as use it as a base from which to establish their dominance over the peasantry. They variously cooperated with and resisted one or other party in the Mughal-Maratha conflicts in furtherance of their own aims, therefore. Yet, they became such a problem for the late Maratha (and colonial) polities that they were literally smoked out as the forest was cleared and burnt to rid the landscape of hiding places (in one stroke also creating more areas of settled agriculture).[74] Around this time, the Russian imperial state, too, took resort to similar strategies of eco-destruction in their war against Muslim groups in the forested uplands of the Caucasus.[75]

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[69] Habib, *Agrarian System*.

[70] Satish Chandra has asserted that it was not transfer *per se*, but its frequency, that was the problem: 'Review', 358.

[71] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 327–28, 366–69.

[72] See, for example: Asher and Talbot, *India*, 49, for details of peasant resistance to taxation in the thirteenth-century Delhi Sultanate.

It was also true that some of the pools of peasant movements were galvanised by caste allegiances or the appeal of egalitarian, liberationist philosophies such as Sikhism or the beliefs of the Satnamis.[76] In Siam, too, opposition between hereditary local lords and commoners – spurred by commercialisation and growing tax burdens – coalesced in years of poor harvests under the leadership of charismatic saintly figures, as in 1581, 1694, and 1698.[77] By the 1660s or 1670s, however, the zamindars were willing to join forces with the peasants, according to Habib. He views the state's squeezing of rural surplus as a motive not only for peasant resistance, but also for an uprising of the zamindars, since the latter had been left with little scope for their own exactions and repudiated the centre's consistent efforts to strip them of their autonomy and turn them into creatures of the emperor.[78] The area around Agra had for some time been an area of fomenting tensions, with a number of revolts by Jat peasants through the early seventeenth century, but the Jat rebellion really took off in the final quarter of the century under the leadership of Raja Ram Jat (d. 1688), characterised by plundering of the *parganas* around Delhi and Agra. In the south, too, peasant grievances were coalesced under the direction of the Maratha leader, Shivaji. The great tragedy, according to Habib, is that the ultimate outcome of these uprisings was not the eclipse of the Mughals for a different and better future, but something more reactionary – namely, the creation of new baronies, kingdoms, and imperial polities that were hardly a break with the social and proprietary relations of times past.[79]

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[73] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 380; Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed.*

[74] Guha, 'Forest Polities'.

[75] Reynolds, 'Muslim Mobilization', especially 194–95.

[76] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 395–98.

[77] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 319.

[78] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 384–89.

[79] Other explanations link unrest to price inflation in the seventeenth century, but the evidence for Asia is more speculative than for Europe; see: Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 157.

Habib's argument is classically Marxist structuralist-functionalist, locating imperial crisis in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and seeing it as the product of class conflict born of exploitation.[80] Since its publication, other historians have called to issue both the extent and nature of conflict. Some claim that the particular phase studied by Habib soon cooled, having more to do with the scarcity and famines of the 1660s than maldesigned institutions that encouraged stripping peasants of all their surplus in the face of weak checks and balances.[81] M. Athar Ali offers a different but nonetheless structuralist-functionalist interpretation. The late seventeenth-century imperial crisis occurred not because of mal-incentives or malfunction, but rather a breakdown in the core institution of empire. This 'crisis of the *jagirdari*' amounted to a widening gulf between the cost of supporting servicemen and the capacity of the land to yield the necessary revenue. It arose because of inflation in *mansabs*, the cost of Aurangzeb's prolonged war in the Deccan, and the strategic incorporation of Deccani and Maratha warrior-nobles into the *mansabdari*, often into elevated ranks, on the one hand, and the shortage of *paibaqi* (land awaiting assignment as either *jagir* or *khalisa*), on the other. It was sufficiently palpable for one writer to lament that the world was *be-jagiri* (without *jagirs*), others saying that land was like a single pomegranate put before a hundred sick men ('*yek anar, sad bimar*'). In the face of all this, a policy of expediency – namely, recruiting would-be opponents into service – remained in place.[82] Inevitably, Athar Ali claims, the only way for servicemen to acquire sufficient *jagirs* was to employ agents or request patrons intercede on their behalf, paying bribes where necessary, which was out of the reach of the smaller *mansabdars*.[83]

Aurangzeb was thankfully no Philip II of Spain (r. 1556–98) – a king whose religious fervour all too frequently led him to imprudence, whether in the form of political disaster or financial ruin.[84] The empire may have been overstretched, J.F. Richards argued, but in a different way. There was no shortage of *paibaqi* in the 1680s, but rather the deliberate and calculated transference of land to *khalisa* instead of *jagir*. The cause of crisis was a failure to properly distribute these lands, combined with how Maratha, Telugu, Bedar, and Gond leaders were incorporated into the imperial system. Theirs was a 'shallow' incorporation, in the sense of not being as deep as that of the Rajputs' and other *khanazads'* incorporation, who were more affectively tied to the centre through marriage and social relations of long-standing. There was also a failure to incorporate – perhaps even to aggravate – other Deccani groups on the empire's southern periphery.[85] Where the Mughal leadership failed, the Asaf

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[80] Habib was not the first to pivot his argument on class-conflict. For an earlier exposition along such lines, see: Smith, 'Lower-Class Uprisings'.

[81] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, xxiv.

[82] Ibid, 11, 92–93.

[83] Ibid, 93.

[84] Parker, *Imprudent King*.

[85] Richards, 'Imperial Crisis'. See, also: Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 77–79.

Jahi dynasty – erstwhile Mughal *subadars* themselves – succeeded by skilfully incorporating these very groups into the successor state known as Hyderabad (formerly Golkonda).[86]

7.2 The Kingdom as Household?

Already, by the late 1970s, the application of Marxist theory to historical problems – with its structuralist bent and preoccupation with economistic reasoning – was no longer *en vogue*. The problem with Habib and Athar Ali's analyses of the 1960s, brilliant and important though they remain, are several. First, the explanation builds up a picture of the empire in its classical ideal or perfectly functioning form, often based on sources penned by its principal architects, to then demonstrate how some fault or other precipitated a crisis. The empire is doomed on Habib's account, a little less so on Athar Ali's, insofar as the seed of crisis is sown into its institutional core. Besides making crisis and decline seem inevitable, their frameworks make it difficult to properly account for the frequent occurrence of rebellion, whether by high-ranking nobles or even imperial princes. And there is little room for culturalist explanations, which are largely consigned to the background. It would take longer for historians to properly address the former of these problems, but the place of culture and affect as well as social themes was coming into view by the late 1970s.

7.2.1 The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire

Inspired by Max Weber's concept of traditional authority, Stephen Blake defines a kind of state that emerged in the early modern period – the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire. This was somewhere between the Weberian ideal types of the (pre-modern, personalistic) patrimonial kingdom and the (modern, impersonalised) bureaucratic state. The ruler of the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire could not rely on his family and loyal household troops alone for the business of ruling his vast domain; he additionally had to rely on other nobles and their soldiers, as well as an increasingly large cadre of bureaucrats, yet all the while strived to establish close and personal ties of allegiance with such actors where possible, so that his kingdom was *like* an extension of his household.[87] Some of the means by which he achieved this have already been described: the award of *mansabs* to loyal servants of the state, their regular rotation between official postings and stints at court, and the creation of provincial and district offices with overlapping responsibilities.

Power relationships in Mughal India, Gommans observes, 'were indicated by the image of near and far, in and out, or movement in either direction'.[88]

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[86] Faruqui, 'Hyderabad'.

[87] Blake, 'Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire'.

[88] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 59.

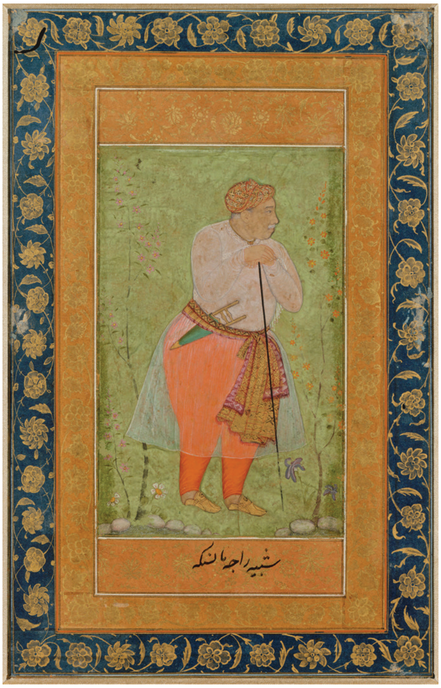

Fig. 7A Portrait of Raja Man Singh of Amber (ink, watercolour, and gold, by Mughal artists, c. 1590)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1982.174

The *amir*'s dignity could be assessed based on his proximity (*taqarrub*) to the emperor and, relatedly, his love (*mahabbat*) for him. This proximity meant the king's generosity (*sakhawat*), magnanimity (*hilf*), and favour (*lutf*), while love was connected to devotion (*mawaddat*) and friendship (*dosti*).[89] These affects, Gommans notes, were consonant with medieval European notions of *familiaritas* or *fides*.[90] They were made manifest in court institutions such as *khanazadagi*, by which nobles were incorporated not merely as *mansabdars* but even more closely as 'sons of the royal house'.[91] The selection of special wet-nurses for the imperial princes gave rise to a parallel family of foster brothers (*kokas*), mothers (*amagas*), and fathers (*atagas*). The *kokas'* intimacy with the princes from birth made them lifelong and loyal companions and meant the former were often given senior positions in state.[92]

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[89] Ibid, 57.

[90] Ibid, 57.

[91] See: Richards, 'Norms', especially 262–67.

[92] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 58.

Offering daughters in marriage to the imperial family was another route to this closest kind of incorporation, as pursued by the Rajput Kachhwahas of Amber and the Rathors of Marwar from Akbar's reign to that of Farrukhsiyar.[93] The fruit of Akbar's matrimony to a Kachhwaha princess, for instance, was the future emperor, Jahangir. Also the emperor's kinsman, therefore, Raja Man Singh I of Amber (1550–1614) was one of Akbar's most trusted servicemen (Fig. 7A). He grew up enjoying the fondness of the emperor and was bestowed the title of *farzand* (son), before reaching maturity to become a grandee with a *mansab* of five thousand, then the highest attainable, and ascending to the throne of his own Rajput state in 1589.[94] Others, too, developed such proximity to the king as to be referred to as *baradars* (brothers) or *farzands*. Of course, another reading of *khanazadgi* is as a form of hostage-taking, which – alongside the regular appearance of servicemen at court or these other means of quasi-familial incorporation – was a means of affirming face-to-face and deep, personal bonds of loyalty to the emperor.[95] Proximity was also experienced through the emperor's approach toward a noble, his touch or embrace, the exchange of gifts and his bestowal of a robe of honour (*khilat*), and even performative weeping, such as Khan Jahan Lodi and Jahangir's weeping upon their separation as the former left for service in the Deccan in 1609.[96]

Proximity was of such importance that the Mughal emperor and his court were continually on the move. This peripateticism was part of their Turko-Mongolic inheritance, for the moving court and camp of the Mughals – and, for that matter, the Safavids and Qing – was linked to notions of the saddle as a throne and to the *ordo* (moving camp), although it found Indic counterpart in the notion of *digvijaya*, while also being comparable to kingly processions, royal entries, pilgrimages, martial rituals and hunting expeditions as far afield as late medieval and early modern Iberia or England.[97] Prior to launching his campaign to conquer Hindustan, for instance, Babur went on a tour of the autumn harvest in and around Kabul, inviting local men and women, a dervish, and musicians to a party in his tent. There was a playfulness about this gathering, but also a curiosity in local society and a desire to dip into its wellsprings of local knowledge.[98] Indeed, the advantages of movement were several: to suppress local rebellion or reaffirm the bond with local elites as a prophylactic against their disobedience, not least in the *mawas*; to gather information about the imperial domains, particularly newly conquered and administered areas; for the surveillance of imperial servicemen and the (surprise) inspection of the contingents they were expected to keep at the ready; and to practice military manoeuvres and martial skill.

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[93] See: Ziegler, 'Rajput Loyalties'. Such marriages were cast as 'shameful deeds' and thus struck from Rajput royal and local histories, hence the comparative silence surrounding them despite the continuation of this practice until at least 1715, as Taft has highlighted in 'Honor and Alliance'. See, also: Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 427–29.

[94] Asher, 'Architecture', 183–84.

[95] Blake, 'Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire', 80.

[96] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 59–60.

[97] Gommans, 'Post-Nomadic Empire'; Kinra, *Writing Self*, 158. On the latter point: Ruiz, *King Travels*, with a useful comparative discussion on 13–15.

[98] Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 69; Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 78–81, for a larger analysis of Babur's 'drinking parties'.

In the foreground of Fig. 7B, we see Aurangzeb being carried in a palanquin; before him are hunters bearing firearms, men carrying leafy shields for camouflage, and deer awaiting release as bait for big game. In the background, we can see the procession of the vast imperial camp – led by elephants carrying imperial banners, as well as camels and horses – toward what looks like a town or city (top left), from which the hunting party must have broken away for sport. The Mughals processed in a vast camp. Two identical sets meant one could be erected up ahead, ready for the emperor's arrival, the first then dismantled. It was peopled with tens or even hundreds of thousands of courtiers, retainers, soldiers, scribes, artisans, household staff, and the like.[99] The camp reproduced the finely graded hierarchies of the static court and all its activities, from prayer and *darshan* to public and private audiences (§8.2).[100] Akbar was celebrated for his regular movement. Aurangzeb's own council for kings advised that a king should never rest, a view echoed by the Mughal viceroy in the eighteenth-century Deccan. On average, the Mughal emperors from Akbar to Aurangzeb spent 65 per cent of their reign stationary and the remainder on tour, hunting, or on military campaigns, a figure not dissimilar to estimates of how the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I spent his reign (1588–1629) or the pressing importance of movement to maintaining Qing identity and prowess articulated by the Kangxi (r. 1662–1722) and Qianlong emperors (r. 1736–95).[101]

Patrimonial themes, Rosalind O'Hanlon notes, are also evident in imperial presentation from the Delhi Sultanate era, in which the emperor was father to all his subjects and husband to the wider realm, the kingdom thus a giant household.[102] The plausibility of the Mughal state evolving even more closely toward Blake's model of patrimonial-bureaucratic empire is not in doubt and the model certainly has advantages over terms like 'gunpowder empire' used to describe the Mughal, Ottoman, and Safavid polities because it captures 'a real and important functional aspect of all three states at various times in their histories.'[103] Yet, there are limitations.

In the first place, Blake's analysis is static and synchronic, for much of his evidence derives from the *Ain-i Akbari*.[104] A work penned by a chief architect

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[99] Richards, 'Imperial Authority', 136–38. Kinra, *Writing Self*, 131–35 offers detail of the moving court/camp based on Chandar Bhan Brahman's account.

[100] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 106–07, 109–11; Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 94–95, 97–99, 101–02.

[101] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 100–02; Gommans, 'Post-Nomadic Empire', 13–16.

[102] O'Hanlon, 'Manliness', here 54.

[103] Dale, *Muslim Empires*, 5.

[104] Blake, 'Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire', 81–94. That said, these ideas also surface in Blake's monograph, *Shahjahanabad*, which necessarily involved the author's engagement with sources from Shah Jahan's and later reigns.

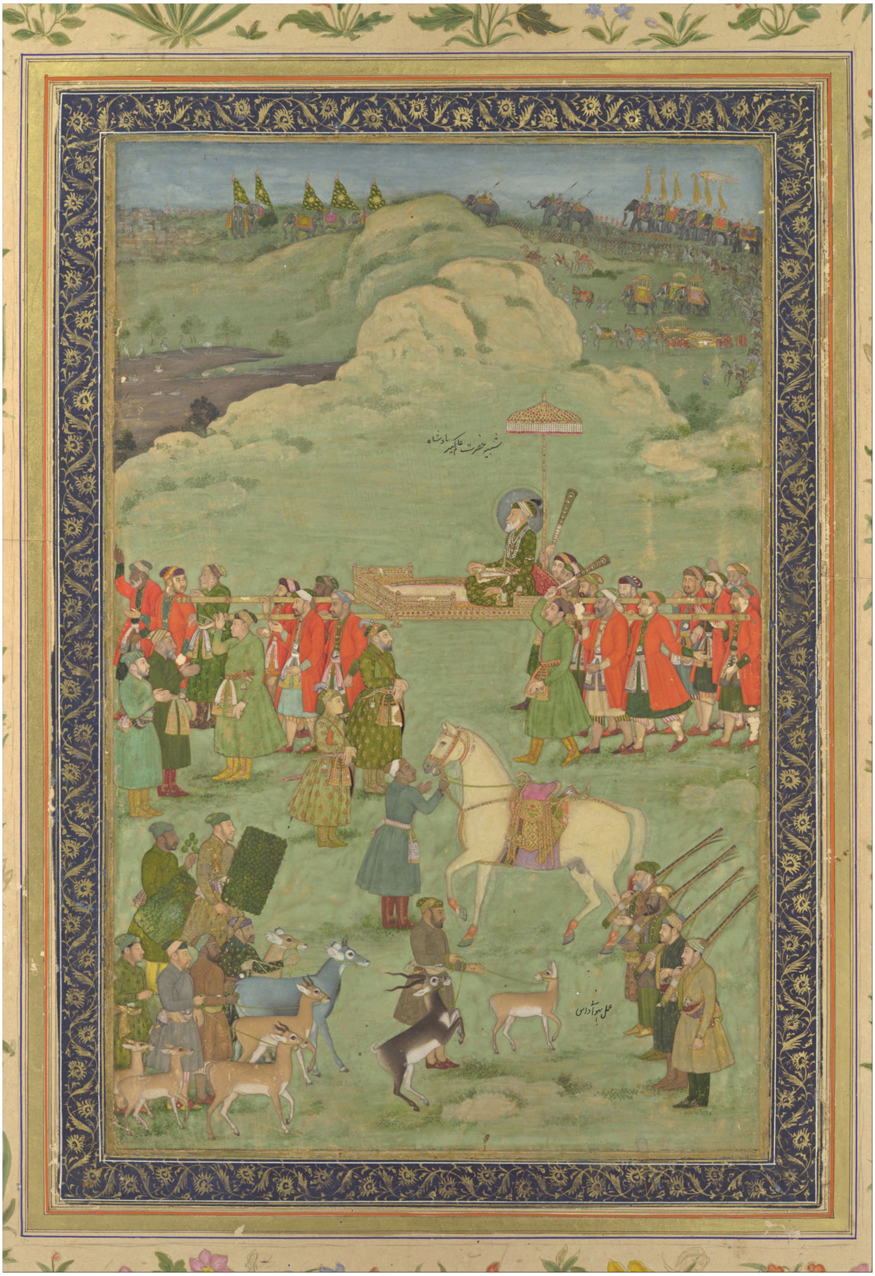

Fig. 7B Aurangzeb Carried on a Palanquin to a Hunt (watercolour and gold; by the Mughal artist Bhavanidas; c. 1704-20)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2003.430

of Mughal imperialism can hardly be expected to offer a reliable and representative snapshot of the state and power relations in the late sixteenth century, however, to say nothing of how these changed in the face of further expansion in the century that followed. It helps to remember that empires were seldom uniform so much as 'lumpy', a fact of which Ottoman historians have been more honest: direct rule and dense bureaucracy could be found in the imperial core (e.g., Anatolia and the Balkans), with indirect rule and patrimonialism being common in places at a greater distance from the centre (e.g. the Arab provinces).[105] Blake's model flattens some of the spatial diversity in ruling arrangements and those resulting from the empire growing and evolving.

Because he relies upon imperial sources, secondly, Blake's model attributes all authority to the emperor and his ruling centre, from whence power radiates outwards along strictly vertical lines of command. Such an emperor-centric vision of the Mughal state, which itself appears as hegemonic and highly centralised as it does in the works of historians like Habib and Athar Ali, runs into numerous difficulties. One problem concerns the role of imperial princes, to which we shall return in the next section, but others must be dealt with presently. On Blake's analysis, which relies on the image of the *ideal* king prescribed in contemporary ethical-moral treatises, not only is the very fraught process of self-fashioning that produced the *actual* kingly subject eliminated from view, but we also catch little sight of the bureaucratic rank-and-file in the so-called patrimonial-*bureaucratic* empire, while the important political roles of royal women seem not to feature at all.[106] Until very recently, in fact, women have only made an appearance in Mughal historiography where the emperor has been deemed 'weak', either as conniving figures preying upon the emperor's aloofness from his kingly duties, or as figures for whom a space is opened up by virtue of the emperor's ineffectualness as a ruler.[107] To form a richer and more accurate picture, therefore, we might begin by asking: what roles *could* royal women play in politics?

7.2.2 The Political Roles of Royal Women

Queenship studies is a newly invigorated field. Its purview now extends well beyond Europe and scholars have brought to light the roles of females as monarchs, regents, and consorts around the globe, not to mention their 'queenly patronage, political agency, household dynamics, reputation and representation, and, more recently, diplomatic activity.'[108] Regnant queenship was not impossible within the framework of Islamicate monarchy and society: Jalalat al-Din Razya, better known as 'Razia Sultana' (r. 1236–40), was a female monarch of the first of the Delhi Sultanates, albeit the only regnant queen of the Sultanate and Mughal states, while later seventeenth-century Aceh was ruled by four women in turn, beginning with Sultana Tajul Alam Safiatuddin (r. 1641–75).[109] Rare but hardly impossible in the Muslim world, therefore, female monarchs also came to power in the Hindu dynasties of north and south India from time to time.

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[105] See: Barkey, 'Bureaucratisation'.

[106] Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 1–23, including a valuable critique of Blake's analysis on 12–13. See, also: Subrahmanyam, 'Structure or Process', 307–10, for another critique.

[107] Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 24–68, for a different view derived from the analysis of European and Mughal sources.

[108] Woodacre, 'Introduction', 1, for citation, and the volume as a whole, which presents recent work from the field.

By turning to indigenous and Dutch East India Company sources, Lennart Bes describes the reigns of four Hindu queens of the newly established royal houses of Vijayanagara's successor states: Chennammaji (r. c. 1673–97) and Virammaji (r. c. 1757–63), who ruled over Ikkeri, and Mangammal (r. 1691–1707) and Minakshi (1732–39) of Madurai. They were queen consorts turned widow queens and then queen mothers (and grandmother, in Mangammal's case). They avoided the ritual practice of dying with their husband on his funeral pyre (*sati*) by claiming to be pregnant or having the duty of raising the new king to his majority, suggesting that their contemporaries saw them merely as regents whose rule would be temporary. True, some of their successors sought to present their rule as unwise even as they tacitly acknowledged them as fully-fledged monarchs, yet these women sought to present *themselves* as monarchs (not mere regents) and made full use of their authority, much like their Achenese counterparts or those in Africa and Europe.[110] Other royal women or female courtiers, moreover, continued to play a part in diplomacy and trade negotiations in these southern courts.[111]

Women might try and smooth relations between siblings, as Jahanara did when she beseeched Aurangzeb not to fight his brother, Dara Shukoh, for the Mughal throne.[112] Women also played a central role in faction- or alliance-building in the process of *fitna* (described later in this chapter), but it was as regent and queen mother that significant political power could be wielded more readily, as evinced by the lives of Khanzada Humayun of sixteenth-century Ahmadnagar or the remarkable Tarabai.[113] Born into the Mohite clan, a key Maratha lineage group, and with her father at the top of the service hierarchy, Tarabai's marriage to one of Shivaji's sons strengthened the Maratha dynasty and her family's fortunes at a stroke. Her early life played out against the background of Aurangzeb's campaigns in the Deccan and the hostility between the Mughals and Marathas. Tarabai was well respected even in her enemy's camp, however, with Mughal writers noting her courage, independence, and knowledge of civil and military matters.

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[109] Phulera, 'Queenship'; Khan, *Sovereign Women*.

[110] Bes, 'Ambiguities'. Among early modern African regnant queens was Aminatu – a direct contemporary of Elizabeth I – who ruled over Zazzu, a Hausa kingdom in what is now Nigeria.

[111] Gomez, 'Sanskrit', 193.

[112] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 245–47, for her letter to Aurangzeb.

[113] On Khanzada Humayun, see: Michell and Zebrowski, *Art and Architecture*, 144–47. On Tarabai's role in Maratha politics, see: Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, discussion on 51–115.

Upon her husband's death in 1700, she declared her son the new king and assumed the position of regent, for he was in his minority, effectively making her the 'Queen of the Marathas', as Portuguese officials in Goa called her. Under her leadership and supported by men such as Kanohji Angria, the Maratha armies were not only driven deep into nominally Mughal zones, but made to settle and thereby establish a deep and permanent Maratha presence – a policy of open conflict and 'creeping colonisation' also pursued by her successors in the Maratha government. Unfortunately for Tarabai, the release from Mughal captivity of Shahu, Shivaji's eldest son and heir, created a contest for the Maratha leadership; even men such as Kanohji Angria eventually defected to Shahu's camp. Tarabai's son had just come into his majority, and so Shahu moved to imprison them both. Thirty-four years later, in 1748, while living under house arrest at Shahu's court, she convinced Shahu that her grandson should succeed him. In so doing, she returned herself to power, albeit sharing the reins with the Maratha *peshwas*.[114] Besides such royal women as Tarabai, finally, were figures like Suraya Murad Begum (d. 1779), wife of the Mughal *subadar* of Lahore, who became *de facto* ruler after the death of her husband and periodically thereafter.[115]

Why has it been so hard to visualise the political roles of such women, let alone do so positively? Referring to the period when Scotland, England, and France were all ruled by female monarchs, John Knox proclaimed despairingly in 1588 of the 'Monstrous Regiment of Women'.[116] Significantly, this period overlapped with the so-called 'Sultanate of Women' (1534–1683), when high-ranking women of the Ottoman dynasty wielded an unprecedented political power. Some contemporaries – and historians later relying on their testimony – felt the relocation of politics to the women's quarters was illegitimate and reflected the corruption and decay of the Ottoman dynasty as much as it caused the Ottoman state's weakening and decline. True, sultanic authority was departing from that which held strong in the classical age: no longer a conquering khan or even a righteous *ghazi* or caliph, the Ottoman sultan's legitimacy derived from a new ideal of the sovereign as 'a sedentary monarch whose defence of the faith was manifested more in demonstrations of piety, support of the holy law, and endowment of religious institutions than in personal participation in battle, and whose charisma was derived more often from seclusion broken by ritual ceremony than from martial glory.'[117] This did not entail weakness, however, and – as Leslie Peirce's seminal study of the Ottoman imperial harem shows – women played an important and positive role in giving shape to the new division of sovereignty and power-sharing that was coming into being as the empire moved into its post-expansionary phase.[118]

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[114] See: Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 177–202, with discussion of less sanguine portraits of her in the historiography as a cunning genius (on account of her conflict with the Brahman Peshwas) on 200–01.

[115] Khoja, 'Gender'.

[116] Langlois, 'Comparing', 271, for reference, and *passim*, for an analysis of female leadership in France and the Ottoman world. The backdrop to this misogynistic tirade against female monarchs was the religious change of the Reformation, and it was 'popish' (i.e., Catholic) queens who were really Knox's target: Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 414, 431.

A mix of misogyny and Orientalism has likewise blackened the reputations of Mughal royal women like Nur Jahan (d. 1645), the wife of Jahangir, to say nothing of the tacit andro-centricity of models like Blake's that provides little space to examine the roles of female elites.[119] Although nothing like a Mughal 'sultanate of women' existed, female royals were never limited to being consorts and companions, nor played a political role only by manipulating the relations of 'soft power' via benefactions to religious and charitable institutions or as patrons of urban infrastructure – although they readily did so, thanks to their tremendous accumulated wealth.[120] Taking inspiration from Peirce's work, Ruby Lal focuses on the imperial harem in the period of Babur, Humayun, and Akbar's reigns, and from that vantage point sets out what it meant for Mughal royal women to be sisters, mothers, grandmothers, and wives, while also bringing into view their other roles. Among these were guidance and peace-making or conciliation in the course of war, either by virtue of their age/generation and wisdom, or through their agency as brides, captives, and hostages.[121] As the Mughal state became somewhat more rooted and slightly less of a peripatetic entity in Akbar's reign, moreover, so the harem came to be located in a clearly conceived physical space. In this development, we find a parallel with the sedentarisation of the Ottoman sultan in the imperial palace, and with similar consequences, in turn.[122] One was the influence of matriarchs and older generations over younger ones; another was the significance of relationships forged in the harem – including milk ties to wet nurses and their families – to patterns of patronage and the careers of servicemen in the world outside. Overall, changes in Akbar's domestic life were part and parcel with those changes 'that went into the making of the empire more generally.'[123]

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[117] Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 185, for citation.

[118] Ibid, especially 148–49, 177–275. Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 14–20, sets Peirce's contribution in the context of feminist critiques and debates of the time, while noting some criticisms of the volume.

[119] Nur Jahan, for instance, is remembered as a beauty who became the favoured wife of Jahangir – himself frequently painted as disinterested in politics and addicted to opium – from which position she connived with her father, brother, and the would-be emperor Shah Jahan to domineer the emperor and exert effective control over the Mughal realm; Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 102–03, 112–14. See, also: Khoja, 'Gender', which examines how the prejudices of colonial-era historians like Jadunath Sarkar reduced Suraya Murad Begum to a mere 'opportunist who used her feminine wiles to secure and maintain power' (19). See, as a path towards a corrective: Balabanlilar, 'Women'. On the political lives of Safavid royal women: Szuppe, 'Jewels of Wonder', 331–37.

[120] Alongside examples elsewhere in this book, see: Kozlowski, 'Women'.

[121] Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, especially 128–39, 166–75.

[122] Lal is attentive to differences in the harem as an institution, and its history, in the Mughal, Ottoman, and Safavid empires: ibid, 215–25.

7.2.3 Bureaucrats and the Bureaucracy

If the kingdom was the extension of the household, therefore, then it seems unwise to neglect the roles played by the queen mothers, wives, and princesses of the imperial family. For the same reason, recent interest in scribal communities and the careers of high-level bureaucrats is very welcome, helping us flesh out a part of the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire so vital to Blake's model yet virtually absent from his analysis. The state's capacity to suck-up material and military resources rested upon the capabilities of a verbally and numerically literate service gentry. This was not the realm inhabited by the better-studied lord of the sword (*arbab-i saif*), but top-level bureaucrats and the vast number of lower-ranking pen-pushers (*ahl-i qalam*).[124] This was not a single class, centrally-disciplined by the education in a common curriculum and inculcation into the practices of the modern state, *à la* Weberian bureaucracy, but an early modern bureaucracy nonetheless.[125]

Take, for instance, Chandar Bhan Brahman. Born into a Brahman family sometime in the later Akbari era and educated in Sanskrit, he chose not a priestly career but that of a *munshi* (state secretary), working through the reigns of Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb before his death in the late 1660s. Beginning as a clerk in his native Punjab, he distinguished himself from men of similar backgrounds by rising through the ranks to serve Shah Jahan's *wazirs* (prime ministers) while working in the *diwani* (fiscal office), even ascending to the office of the emperor's personal secretary and diarist.[126] He was a bureaucrat but also an esteemed writer of poetry and prose in Persian, penning the *Chahar Chaman* ('The Four Gardens'), a memoir of his life at court, and the *Munsha'at-i Brahman* (a collection of his personal letters), that became 'two of the most widely circulated – and emulated – Persian prose texts in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century South Asia.'[127] His life overlapped with Mustafa Ali's, the Ottoman bureaucrat and prolific litterateur and intellectual whose career also spanned the reigns of several sultans.[128]

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[123] Ibid, 196–215.

[124] For a sense of the interest in scribes and the service gentry, including the reconstruction of their social worlds and worldviews, which is but one slice of the abovementioned endeavour, see: O'Hanlon and Washbrook, 'Introduction', especially 441 and n.1. For details of the distinction of 'men of the sword' and 'men of the pen' in the Ottoman and Safavid empires compared to the Mughal Empire, see: Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 149.

[125] *C.f.* Richards, 'Norms'.

[126] Kinra, *Writing*, 2–5, 21–22.

[127] Ibid, for citation, and 52, where Kinra notes the esteem in which Chandar Bhan Brahman was held among contemporaries.

[128] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat*. Mustafa Ali eventually had a patrimonial relationship with the sultan yet did not always serve each of his sultans directly, finding offices in Ottoman households,

Chandar Bhan's aims in composing these works were only partly self-serving, whether in flattering the emperor by revealing the workings of his government, in drawing on his own varied and impressive career, or in showcasing his flair as a Persian stylist. But the most significant objective was to offer existing and future bureaucrats a guide on exemplary conduct and good administration – a kind of 'mirror for *munshi*s' in complement to the manuals for ministers (*dastur al-wizarat*) and rulers (*nasihat al-muluk*) that circulated in the Indo-Persianate worlds, and which were akin to mirror-for-princes texts. By 'describing the excellent qualities of the great Mughal *wazirs* of his era such as Raja Todar Mal (d. 1589), Afzal Khan Shirazi (d. 1639), Sa'd Allah Khan (d. 1656), and Raja Ragunath (d. 1664),' for example, he 'showed that successful governance was not simply about military authority (*imarat*) but also a matter of balanced temperament, managerial skill (*wizarat*), a keen mystical and literary sensibility (*ma'rifat*), and a deep concern for the public welfare above one's own.'[129] A competence in Persian was not enough to make a successful and adept secretary. A wide-ranging knowledge and ability to emulate Persian epistolary styles was necessary, but so, too, was knowledge of canonical treatises on statecraft, ethics (*akhlaq*), political history, and civility and manners.[130] Accounting (*siyaq*) skills were not remiss, either, sitting beside more highbrow talents like reciting *ghazal*s and *masnavi*s (poetry and rhyme) as part of the secretarial arts (*munshigiri*). Other qualities included a spiritual or mystical detachment from the world, toleration, and a sense of discretion. Overall, high birth was less important than the mastery of such skills, which were the vehicle to upward social mobility and grace.[131]

The early modern period was an 'age of secretaries'. This is hardly surprising, for 'institutions that sought to capture the world in writing' – namely, 'companies, universities, religious foundations and, above all, governments' – were in greater contact with each other than ever before.[132] It fell to secretaries to issue communications, craft relations, and record proceedings, but some – in the guise of chancellors, chief ministers, and ambassadors – became agents of the exchange of gifts and goods, as well as ideas and culture, more broadly. This upsurge in communication and record-keeping was often accompanied by a drive toward preservation and archiving. When considered alongside the impact of printing, the innovations brought about by new forms of accounting and the enhanced numeracy of commercial actors, as well as the tendency toward empiricism in intellectual circles, we might begin to conceive of an

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which were – as in many parts of the early modern world – alternative loci of bureaucratic energies, as well as in Ottoman ministries.

[129] Kinra, *Writing*, 6, for citation, and 68–84, for analysis. See, also: Kinra, 'Master and Munshi', especially 541–58.

[130] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 505–20, for primary source material.

[131] Kinra, *Writing*, 60–61, 64, 67, 84–94, for the details in this paragraph.

[132] Dover, 'Introduction', 1, for citation, and the wider volume for a geographically wide-ranging survey of the topic.

'information revolution' in the early modern period (§10.1).[133] We know much more about the highest-ranking secretaries; undoubtedly talented, some nevertheless ascended as 'royal favourites'. These grandees served emperors, kings, and the rulers of republics or city-states like Florence, and include such figures as Mercurino Gattinara (1465–1530), Francisco de los Cobos (1477–1547), and Bernhard Cles' (1485–1539) in the Habsburg world; Thomas Cromwell and William Cecil (1521–98) in Tudor England; Michel de l'Hôpital (1507–73) and cardinals Richelieu (1585–1642) and Mazarin (1602–61) in France; Celalzade Mustafa (c. 1490/1–1567), Ramazanzade Mehmed (d. 1571), and Feridun Ahmed (d. 1583) in the Ottoman Empire; Qadi Ahmad Qummi (d. after 1606) and Iskandar Munshi (1560/61–1633) in Safavid Iran; and, of course, Abu al-Fazl, Afzal Khan Shirazi, and Chandar Bhan Brahman in Mughal India.[134]

Chandar Bhan Brahman was outstandingly accomplished but not entirely singular; he was part of a larger service gentry, after all. Like his counterparts across Eurasia, he depended upon a vast and often hierarchical network of less powerful secretaries more remote from their ultimate master (the emperor). In more textually literate societies, they might coalesce into a class even as they hailed from a diverse range of backgrounds, whereas secretaries in places like the early modern Ottoman world or India often originated in communities known for their traditions of service or scribal skills – the Phanariot Greeks and the Kayasthas in these respective contexts. This was not the case from time immemorial, however. The bureaucracy of the Tughluq state was dualistic: its lower reaches were staffed by some Muslim scribes and supplemented by Hindu scribes known as *kayastha*s, while its uppermost part (the chancery) was formed of a Persianate Muslim elite. This formed the inheritance of the Mughal state until, under Akbar, all but the bottom-most record-keepers wrote their accounts in Persian. The higher tiers of the bureaucracy thus used Persian, even if they were drawn – as in the case of Chandar Bhan – from Persian-speaking but not necessarily Persian or even Muslim communities (§10.1).[135] Political change combined with the growing hunger for information to propel the advancement of Indian scribal groups in early modern India, therefore, with something similar underway in Safavid Iran, too.[136]

What sort of persons composed the Mughal bureaucracy's lower rungs? First, there was the *qanungo*, as he was known in north India, or *deshpandia*, as he was called in the south. They were generally drawn from the accountant or scribal castes of Kayasthas or Khatris, the office usually ran within particular families, and this meant that they were valuable repositories of local knowledge. This ever-developing body of knowledge furnished the centre with what it needed to assign and reassign *jagirs*, but he also received the *amils'* returns and checked these against those of the zamindars, so that his office was positioned to detect corruption. (By contrast, the *amils* or *amalguzars* – who were the *jagirdars'* revenue agents – did not come from the locality). Second, there was the *chaudhuri* (in north India), *desai* (Gujarat), or *deshmukh* (Deccan), who acted as a revenue collector for the locality, and was thus a sort of counterpart to the *qanungo* in the latter's function as an accountant and record-keeper. He was usually the leading zamindar in a *pargana* (a cluster of villages), although powerful zamindars posed a threat to imperial stability. At the very local level, we necessarily find village accountants (*patwaris*).[137] Aside from this vast array of record-keepers were news reporters (*waqa-i navis*), who submitted information up the food chain regarding noteworthy developments, criticisms or complaints, and the conduct of local gentry (zamindars, *jagirdars*).[138]

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[133] Ibid, 3.

[134] Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 5. See: Kinra, 'Learned Ideal', on Afzal Khan. The so-called 'political *vakils*' were agents of eighteenth-century rulers operating beyond the court for the purposes of concluding transactions, negotiation, diplomacy, controlling intelligence, etc. Their identities and functions differed from the ambassadors and diplomats of Chandar Bhan's times, even as they were in flux on account of the post-Mughal political system being highly dynamic; see: O'Hanlon, 'Entrepreneurs'.

[135] Guha, 'Serving the Barbarian', 499–500.

[136] See: Mitchell, 'Wax and Wane'.

The *kayastha* (as a functionary) was a scribe in the service of a political master, and the term refers to a number of caste-based communities or families in such service (i.e., Brahmans, Khatris, and the caste of Kayasthas). This was especially so in the north, where *kayasthas* were 'part of the official class of the Mughal empire, imbued with its Persian literary culture and ethic of loyalty to Mughal imperial service.'[139] Such ethics and standing were somewhat weaker in the Maratha domains in western India, but this had changed by the end of our period.[140] The bureaucracies of south Indian kingdoms may have been distinct on account of being biscriptural and bilingual (Persian and other local languages), but they were otherwise comparable to those of the north, Sumit Guha tells us. Members of established north Indian and/or non-Brahman *kayastha* families tended to occupy a few positions in the upper reaches of south Indian bureaucracies, while local 'Brahman [scriveners] established a firm grip on the lower clerical positions under the Bahmani sultanate and Vijayanagara kingdom', thereby taking on 'prominent political roles in the late seventeenth to eighteenth century.'[141] By erecting barriers to entry revolving around a specialised script used for record keeping unfamiliar to outsiders, and by producing their own training manuals (*mestaks*), these Maratha Brahmans made themselves indispensable within the bureaucratic apparatus of the state, often into the twentieth century.[142] That said, some Kayastha households enjoyed success in the Maratha lands, like the Chitnis family under the Maratha sovereign Shahu Bhonsle (r. 1707–49), who used their toehold to acquire vast portfolios of rights and privileges that, in turn, secured their virtual monopoly over certain secretarial offices.[143]

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[137] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 152–53, 160.

[138] Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility*, 88.

[139] O'Hanlon, 'Social Worth', 565.

[140] Ibid, 565–66, and 573–76, for discussion of the history of migration of Kayasthas to western India at the Delhi Sultanate's zenith in the thirteenth century. See, also: Vendell, 'Pathways'.

[141] Guha, 'Serving the Barbarian', 498.

[142] Ibid, 506–22.

Such acquisition of offices and estates raises an important issue explored recently by Nandini Chatterjee in a unique micro-history of the family of Jayanti Das (fl. 1570s) from Dhar in central India. The family claimed to have been in state service during the Malwa Sultanate, secured their rights and perquisites under the Mughals, and survived through successive changes of regime – first to Maratha rule, then British. They were at once low-ranking zamindars yet also *chaudhuris* and *qanungos*, militarised landed gentry yet also *kayasthas*.[144] Their history muddies the distinction of 'men of the sword' from 'men of the pen', therefore, while their amassing entitlements from the emperor or his representatives in return for the execution of their official duties blurred the line between private rights and public office. None of this is surprising in light of what we know about the marketisation of violence and localised resistance to the agrarian order described in the previous chapter.[145] On the one hand, after all, '[t]ax-collection, however systematised on paper, was only one step away from minor warfare; combinations of skills therefore made good entrepreneurial sense'.[146] On the other hand, 'successful office-holding led to acquisition of lands and tax privileges, pulling the proto-bureaucrat into the militarised world of landlordism.'[147] Yet, all this stands at odds with the idealised picture of the Mughal order described in imperial texts, including the kinds of manual written by the likes of Chandar Bhan Brahman or what we can glean from Abu al-Fazl's *Ain*, so that Chatterjee's bottom-up perspective vastly enriches our understanding of how the empire was actually run.

Recent work on bureaucrats and the paper bureaucracy lends weight to the notion – at the heart of Blake's work, in fact – of a critical transformation or 'modernisation' of the state underway in the early modern period. We might link what has been described here to findings made by Ottoman historians, like Abdurrahman Atçil, Kaya Şahin, and Baki Tezcan. Their work shows that a bureaucratic career – and the status and opportunities that came with it – was open to men of Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds, so long as they possessed the necessary skills; how the bureaucracy itself deepened and had become more sophisticated and specialised by the seventeenth century, while 'a new style in Ottoman bureaucratic practice' was put in place by Celalzade Mustafa; how it sucked-in men of talent who might otherwise have pursued a juristic or pedagogical career, such *madrasa*-educated scholar-bureaucrats fulfilling 'functions at every level of the Ottoman administration and government'; and how they authorised and legitimised (and critiqued) sultan and state, to the extent that we cannot understand the state without them, and are hamstrung by emperor- or executive-centric concepts like 'domination' and 'cooperation'.[148] All of these developments had reached a sufficient pitch by the end of the sixteenth century, thus forming a vital backdrop to the wholesale reformulation of the state from c. 1580 identified by Baki Teczan, which was of such magnitude as to inaugurate the 'Second Ottoman Empire' – a version 2.0 marked, among all else, by new limits upon sultanic absolutism set by state institutions and elites.[149]

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[143] Vendell, 'Pathways'.

[144] Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, especially 70–140, 211–23.

[145] See, also: Fleischer, *Bureaucrat*, 61, which notes the division of the Ottoman ruling elite into men of religious learning, of the pen (bureaucrats), and of the sword, yet observes how individuals like Mustafa Ali could combine all three, more or less.

[146] Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, 140.

[147] Ibid, 140.

Thus, empires with origins or roots in the Middle Ages could meet the challenges of governing a vast domain by innovating, their novel technologies of rule in turn bequeathed to their successor states, which included the Company state in the Mughal case.[150] Against the notion that Portugal was a backward medieval kingdom, it has also lately been shown how overseas expansion stimulated a 'new science of administration' into being, adding to this picture of bureaucratic modernisation in the beginning of our period.[151] Such findings dampen the notion that only a new kind of state was capable of producing the new kinds of information necessary to secure their control over a new kind of world empire; the British and French imperialisms that were rapidly spreading toward the end of the early modern period had important precursors and even depended upon the achievements of prior regimes, in other words.[152] Looking inside such new and supposedly modern imperial states, furthermore, we find evidence of patrimonialism and absolutism enduring in Stuart England, whose growing empire remained 'bureaucratically challenged', all of which tempers our understanding of its 'modernisation'.[153] Ultimately, the sharp contrast drawn between an increasingly bureaucratic and modern West and a resolutely patrimonial and medieval Orient no longer seems tenable.[154]

7.3 Of Davids and Goliaths

Once the spell of a powerful emperor ruling from a hegemonic centre was broken, it became necessary to reconceive the state and power relations entirely.[155] How might we characterise with greater subtlety and complexity the nature of power and the state in early modern India? Might we be able to shift from a fixation on political and economic structure(s) or *forms* to seeing the Mughal state as a *process* with spatial and temporal dynamics as well as 'personalistic' and even environmental dimensions?[156] Can we think of the state as emerging from below?[157]

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[148] Şahin, *Empire and Power*, on Mustafa's life and career, especially 214–42, on the new bureaucratic *esprit d'corps*, and 124, for citation; Atçil, *Scholars*, 220, for other citations, and *passim*.

[149] Tezcan, *Second Ottoman Empire*.

[150] See, for instance: Travers, *Empires of Complaints*.

[151] Xavier, 'Casa da Índia'.

[152] See, Sivasundaram, *Waves*, for a new history of this phase of empire-building.

[153] Greene, 'Britain's Overseas Empire'. See, also: Mishra, *Business of State*.

[154] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 70.

[155] In truth, some of the damage was done by the 'revisionist' work on the eighteenth century that is reviewed in the next section. In essence, by emphasising decentralisation and the continuity

7.3.1 Princes vs. the Emperor

If the continuity of service across several reigns provided by men like Chandar Bhan smoothed transfers of power, rebellions and wars of succession stand out as disrupting that process.[158] In a system where succession was not determined by primogeniture, princes had to devote some of their energies to building up their households in preparation for the struggle with their brothers and other contenders for the throne, something generations of commentators and historians have seen as entirely negative and wasteful.[159] Acknowledging the psychological and material toll this took on princes and their supporters, the career cost to those nobles supporting an unsuccessful prince, not to mention the scarring of the land and the hardship suffered by Indians when war broke out, Munis Faruqui's study of princely households (*sarkars*) nevertheless challenges the prevailing view in four respects.[160]

First, since a prince's political stock was 'dependent on the quality and strength of his *sarkar*', it was imperative that he secured income, both by finessing the management of his *jagir*, and by engaging in trading ventures and military campaigns, as well as by amassing and setting aside valuable gifts, all of which were good training for a future leader.[161] Such activities also helped to better integrate and consolidate control over the erstwhile imperial frontiers – in Bengal, for instance – which bore long-term benefits to the empire.

Second, this process forced him to seek out men of talent and recruit them into his household, so that the institution of the princely *sarkar* became a vehicle through which 'a wide range of political, ethnic, and class outsiders were first assimilated, acculturated, and socialised within the Mughal system.'[162] This

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between the imperial centre and the 'successor states' over any outright imperial collapse, they forced, reflexively, a reckoning with the image of the state as Leviathan in the Mughal classical age. Long-run models of the state, such as Lieberman's in *Strange Parallels*, however, return emphasis to the Mughal state as Leviathan by contrasting its relatively high degree of centralisation with prior regimes while also seeing centralised states as a repeat phenomenon in the millennium from around c. 800 CE.

[156] Subrahmanyam, 'Structure or Process'. See, also: Hasan, *State and Locality*, 1–8, for an instructive historiographical review and conceptual mooring of such new-wave approaches.

[157] Yes, according to Hasan, who valuably argues thus in *Paper*, especially 96–120, which additionally brings under-utilised documents like petitions into the discussion, and *passim*.

[158] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 219–60, for primary sources.

[159] See: Faruqui, *Princes*, 235–36.

[160] Ibid, 204–05, 238, 242–64.

[161] Ibid, especially 91–102. See, also: Flores, *Jesuit Treatise*, 51–52, 90–92.

[162] Faruqui, *Princes*, citations 91 and 9, respectively.

included imperial nobles, Rajput chiefs, zamindars, and men from military and service lineages; caste-based scribal groups (e.g., Kayasthas) and bankers (Khatris); Muslim clerics, Sufi saints and their *silsilas*, and Hindu temple networks; and even the representatives of European trading organisations.[163] The *sarkar* was not only an alternate locus of power to the imperial court; it stimulated dialogue that could address problems of access to, or representation at, the centre by offering an alternative to the status quo, thus helping the empire to evolve.

Third, a lifetime in preparation and alliance-building meant successful princes had a coalition of supporters upon whom to rely once in power, in this respect smoothing transitions from one reign to another, although this is somewhat speculative.[164] 'Princely courts were models of the imperial court,' Peirce observes in her study of the Ottoman harem, and successful contenders to the throne turned their establishments into a ready-made nucleus of the imperial household.[165] Finally, in a somewhat perverse way, the princely *sarkar* and contests for the throne strengthened the dynasty, for they reaffirmed the emperor – incumbent or waiting in the wings – as the wellspring of rewards, dampening the appeal of challenges from rival dynasties.[166]

Other scholars have variously emphasised the significance of the household as the 'primary unit of political organisation', ranging from classic and new work on the Ottoman world to fresh research into Afghan military households in seventeenth and eighteenth-century south India.[167] Selim's accession to the Ottoman throne in 1512 is revealing, being nothing short of a violent coup against his father and brothers, H. Erdem Çipa argues.[168] It was possible because Selim had built-up supporters across social and military classes, in the centre at Istanbul and in the province of the Balkans, which was the fruit of negotiation and renegotiation with individuals or groups, sometimes even those who had supported his rival brothers or the sultan (even more significant as the latter was still living).[169] If the reigning sultan's power was vested in relations with his elites, the fact that such relations were 'constantly tested, fissured, fractured, renegotiated, and rebuilt begs the question of whether the Ottoman polity ever epitomised the patrimonial empire imagined by most modern scholars.'[170]

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[163] Ibid, 140, 214–17, and *passim*.

[164] Ibid, 254–64.

[165] Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 46, for citation, and 45–47.

[166] Faruqui, *Princes*, 238, and also 274–308, where the author links the decline of princely households from the 1680s to 'imperial decline', since the process of building-up the prince's *sarkar* was undermined by widespread unrest and the empire's supposed financial crisis, in this way retrenching such interpretations and their significance.

[167] Lord Archambault, 'Geographies', 5, for citation, 51–53, for an instructive survey of the typologies of households to be found in early modern India, and *passim*, for analysis.

[168] Çipa, *Making of Selim*, 29–61.

[169] Ibid, 62–108.

[170] Ibid, 67.

What emerges from Faruqui's and Çipa's studies, therefore, is a picture of power that does not look like the neat hub (emperor) and spokes (elites) of a bicycle wheel, where all power *qua* ranks and rewards radiated out of the centre in vertical lines to elites in return for loyalty and service, as per earlier scholarship. The emperor and his court constituted but one locus of power. The existence of princely courts shows that power was diffuse and labile, while the princes' cultivation of horizontal alliances were not mere expediencies, but a fundamental part of the process of state-building (or, rather, reign-building) in the Ottoman and Mughal empires. What is more, a ruler could not take his power for granted once seated on the throne and in command of the assignment of ranks and rewards along vertical lines, for power was fluid and had to be amassed and maintained through alliance-building and ongoing bargaining with those in possession of the resources he needed (i.e., manpower, weapons, cash) in return for what such persons desired (e.g., salaries or profits, offices, status, honour). In what other ways, we might then ask, was power negotiated or else contested by the centre and other actors?

7.3.2 Locality vs. the Empire

Mughal sources speak of the '*darwaza* (doorway), *farakhna* (highway), and *rah* (road)' because they conceive of imperial power radiating from the centre along major military-cum-commercial arteries to the most distant fort under imperial control, with what lay beyond being the territories of rival or as-yet unsubordinated powers.[171] Pratyay Nath's attentiveness to the north Indian landscape and climate helps conceptualise Mughal imperial frontiers a little more precisely, not merely as distant spaces where imperial power was weak or met some natural limit, but as spaces – near or far – produced as a result of the combined 'failure of the empire to control routes of communication, tackle interlinked environmental and military challenges, and to find local allies.'[172] Such environmental and military factors made local collaboration absolutely critical (§6.2.3, §6.4.3).[173] At the same time, (un)successful bargains struck with local allies were seldom the product of the Mughal emperor or the 'imperial centre', but the work of the proverbial man on the spot – usually a *mansabdar* – so that 'ground realities and individual agency deeply shaped the course of imperial expansion.'[174]

Maintaining Mughal rule was likewise a process of ongoing negotiation or re-negotiation. 'As late as 1584', notes Irfan Habib, 'we find the *jama* of a *jagir* in Delhi province subject to bargaining between the admionistration and the prospective assignee' on account of the *jama* differing from the *hasil*.[175] Hardly the mere caveat it seems in Habib's larger account, it was more like the tip of the iceberg: bargaining and negotiation capture centre-province relations better than the any notion of the centre effecting its hegemony. Much like other empires down to modern times, the Mughal Empire was a spatially lumpy entity, with power stronger and relations smoother vis-à-vis provinces closer to the centre, and vice versa in the case of more distant *subas*. Take Gujarat, a *suba* conquered in 1572–73. This was a successful and lasting conquest not only because the ruling elites entered into alliance-making and political negotiation, but because a range of 'subordinate social groups' did so, too. The 'religious leaders, petty merchants, local gentry, tribal lineage groups, warrior clans and even common urban dwellers' of the key cities of Cambay and Surat, Farhat Hasan's important study reveals, used the conquest as an opportunity to 'manoeuvre for a greater share in the state redistributive system.'[176]

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[171] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 217 for citation, although the ideas are derived from: Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*.

[172] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 220.

[173] Ibid, 192–206. See, also: Lally, 'Landscape', especially 278–81.

[174] Nath, *Climate of Conquest*, 216.

If such was the case at the point of annexation, it stands to reason that the consolidation and maintenance of Mughal rule likewise vitally depended on the participation of local corporate groups, for whom participation was a vehicle for the re-negotiation of their rights and entitlements or to contest what they saw as unwarranted.[177] In fact, they became 'co-sharers' in sovereignty, and strived to preserve their relative autonomy vis-à-vis any larger ruling centre as manifested in the latter's representatives (i.e., officeholders like the *mutasaddi*, responsible for the collection of trade revenues, or the *kotwal*, who kept the local order); such officers were influenced to a high degree, as we shall see, by local factors.[178] Though not quite municipal bodies in the European sense, the tug-of-war over rights and autonomy between powerful urban institutions and communities, on the one hand, with the ruling centre, on the other, that Farhat Hasan describes in the context of seventeenth-century Gujarat is nonetheless reminiscent of similar tussles in Europe from at least the Middle Ages.[179]

Between the grandiose self-image of the state, with power coursing outward from its centre via the imperial highways, and the messier reality of striking deals with vested interests, where can the state *actually* be located and how can it be *best* characterised? Borrowing from Michael Braddick's work, we might conceive of the early modern state neither as a figment of the imagination nor as a mere process.[180] The state is ultimately defined, Braddick argues, by its exercise of political power. Whether at the centre or in the locality, this political power resided in officeholders – not individual persons – chief among them the lord lieutenants and their deputies (exercising military-policing functions over their respective counties), sheriffs and justices of the peace (law and order), and the high constables and village constables operating below the justices. They operated in a landscape where non-state institutions of long-standing exercised some administrative and legal power of their own, such as the courts of assizes, which exemplifies 'the intimate and ambiguous relationship between the state and the legal system.'[181] As for the bureaucracy proper, the late Tudor state relied on perhaps one-thousand persons, the vast majority of whom were to be found in the localities. And, much like other officeholders, they 'constantly exercised discretion in implementing their formal powers', revealing 'another level of political decision-making' and the relative weakness of the coordinating centre.[182] Besides these functionaries were those who held lucrative monopolies as well as 'saltpetremen, purveyors, patentees, licensees, hunters after concealed lands and informers', each carrying out 'specialised functions with formally prescribed powers', Braddick tells us, typical of the intimate reliance on contractors or other parties outside the early modern state apparatus proper that we have already seen in relation to trade and economic management (§5.4.3–§5.4.4, §5.5) as well as warmongering and the making of violence (§6.1) in numerous locales across the early modern world.[183]

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[175] Habib, *Agrarian System*, 306. See, also: Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 15–16, for a questioning of whether the fiscal system ever operated as its architects intended that, inadvertently, opens up the whole issue of negotiation between imperial officials in the centre and those in the provinces and localities.

[176] Hasan, *State and Locality*, 30.

[177] On their resistance: ibid, 52–70.

[178] Ibid, 31–51.

[179] Clark, *European Cities*, 91–105, for a survey of those developments.

[180] Braddick, *State Formation*, which – it is worth noting – has exerted an influence on those aspects of Hasan's thinking described in this chapter.

The state, so conceived, was 'a coordinated and territorially bounded network of agencies exercising political power' that 'was distinct from the locality, not by being central but by being more extensive than the locality – it was one of the things common to a number of localities'.[184] It was sufficiently useful to all sorts of people to the extent that, 'far from having to penetrate the localities', the state 'was frequently invited in'.[185] In turn, this reveals something beyond the role of war in the state's expanding and deepening reach amidst its centralisation and modernisation, which has so preoccupied scholars (§6.5).[186] It was the demand for the 'everyday use of political power' that spurred the development of the state already in the two or three generations before the Civil War (1642–51).[187] This demand often came from the localities in their bid to deal with social problems (e.g., plague, famine, poverty), and often involved the wider use of the law to maintain social order (e.g., in the regulation of alehouses and sexual behaviour, to deal with the problems posed by witches and vagrants).[188] There was also a boom in litigation. This resort to the law strengthened legal authority and, thus, the state's authority amidst the expansion of the state's regulatory power and 'the routinisation of government by local officeholders.'[189] The Tudors and Stuarts endeavoured to centralise the state, laying the foundations for even more rapid change in the later seventeenth century. Yet that process could never have been an entirely or largely top-down one, which is precisely why Braddick's analysis is so valuable for historians of the early modern state in south Asia. Indeed, all this helps us visualise a parallel process in Mughal India, where the locus of state formation and development was, as Farhat Hasan duly observes, likewise 'shifting downward to the lower, more locally rooted, links in the system.'[190]

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[181] Ibid, 38.
[182] Ibid, 28, for citations, and 44.
[183] Ibid, 86.
[184] Ibid, 92.
[185] Ibid, citations 9, 93, respectively.
[186] Ibid, 177–286.
[187] Ibid, 94, for citation.
[188] Ibid, 101–76.

7.3.3 Everyday Legal Process vs. the Law of the Land

Maintaining Mughal rule depended not only on constant negotiation with powerholders over their rights, but also the management of diversity (§3.3), the maintenance of order, and the dispensation of justice – all of which were tasks of the Mughal legal order. Akbar and Jahangir spoke to the learned representatives of different communities of belief, one fruit of which was the *Majalis-i Jahangiri*, as much a record of Jahangir's discussions as a presentation of an imperial judicial assembly, in which the monarch was *qazi al-quzat* (judge of judges) and rightful interpreter of *dharma*. Although the emperor sought to manage diversity by establishing a common framework of understanding and by acting as arbiter, the direct impact was probably rather limited.[191] More wide-reaching, by contrast, was the turn to legal formalism palpable in what Alam and Subrahmanyam describe as 'canonisation' – or '*qanun*-isation', more aptly – from Shah Jahan's reign.[192]

Before proceeding, we might pause to consider the similarity of this *qanunisation* to the earlier codification of both religious and secular law under the aegis of the Ottoman centre. Religious law, here, means a branch of Hanafi jurisprudence, which was elevated to the status of the official school of law within the empire.[193] Secular law refers to sultanic or dynastic law, known as *kanun* in the Ottoman sources. Its codification encompassed numerous laws on various matters under the sultan's purview (e.g., criminal law, land tenure, taxation) and was begun after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, with a major contribution to this development made under Suleiman I (r. 1520–66), earning him the epithet *kanuni* ('the lawgiver'). Ottoman *kanun* was an amalgam of *sharia*, Turkic and local laws and customs, Byzantine fiscal practices, and so forth.[194] Obviously, it was not strictly secular, for it absorbed parts of *sharia* or else coexisted and even competed with it in the process of standardising or reconciling potentially different interpretations.[195] Such was its esteem that writers in the post-Suleymanic era possessed a '*kanun*-consciousness', penning mirrors texts that laid the blame for perceived Ottoman decline in the abandonment of the rigorous standards of Ottoman *kanun* – that is, the abandonment of justice and law so integral, they believed, to the Ottoman state.[196] This decline in standards, however, was partly linked to such processes as the interpretation of *kanun* in ways that suited local powerholders, sometimes by redrawing the boundary between *kanun* and *sharia*. Especially in places distant from the centre like Mosul and Basra, this formed part of the wider bargaining between centre and provinces occurring in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – and typical of the negotiated and processual nature of power laid out in the present section of this chapter.[197] Everyday legal process was thus a venue for the striking of those bargains that steadily reformulated the state, yet was also where the state came into being and was often most visible, as we shall see by looking at the Mughal case.

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[189] Ibid, 166.

[190] Hasan, *State and Locality*, 51.

[191] See: Lefèvre, 'Mughal Legal Ideology', 124–36. Sunnism was, of course, the overarching structure of reference for this project.

[192] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 31.

[193] Burak, *Second Formation*, sets out this development and concludes by opening out to comparisons with Safavid, Mughal, and other early modern Muslim polities. Beyond comparability, Burak also suggests that Ottoman developments were linked to Mughal ones; *op. cit.*, 212–13.

A centrepiece of Mughal *qanunisation* was Aurangzeb's sponsorship of a Hanafi legal-literate tradition, which culminated in the *Fatawa-i Alamgiri* (§6.3.1). The *Fatawa* was a collection of rulings, thus striving not only toward the codification of legal opinion, but to settling what rulings Mughal jurists were to use on matters where Hanafi scholars were in dispute amongst themselves.[198] More broadly, it was under Aurangzeb that Mughal legalism reached a high point and that a 'paper empire' emerged, thanks to men of the pen and their work as judges, their submission of regular flows of information to the capital in the form of newsletters (*akhbarat*), and even the measurement and re-surveying of the land as part of the larger turn toward improving precision and, ultimately, greater rationalism.[199] Impetus came as much from the need to widen the tax base as to give the expanding empire a greater coherence and to strengthen the centre, although this last was not necessarily achieved.[200] We might link this attempt at *qanunisation* to the rebellions that sprang up during Aurangzeb's reign, for they 'appear to have been as much related to an attempt to preserve and redefine local and regional autonomy' as they were part of any economic crisis in the empire.[201] We have also encountered other side-effects of these projects, including the growth of a political consciousness among ordinary Shahjahanabadis (§4.2.4). Yet, the major outcome of Aurangzeb's 'bureaucratic systemisation of the delivery of justice' was to change how ordinary subjects experienced the delivery of justice and, ultimately, the state.[202]

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[194] Khoury, 'Administrative Practices', 311.

[195] The support for an official Hanafi school was part of the effort to diminish the friction between *sharia* and secular law, as Burak argues in *Second Formation*, here 18 and *passim*.

[196] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat*, 95–105, 191–200.

[197] See: Khoury, 'Administrative Practice', *passim*, with an instructive comparison to the Qing state on 327–30.

[198] Burak, *Second Formation*, 212–13.

[199] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 31.

[200] Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, 112–13.

[201] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 31.

Aurangzeb sought at once to give the law greater coherence and a Mughal imprint. At the same time, the state-appointment of *qazis* not only represented the assimilation of a key part of the religious/legal establishment, but also made these judges servants of the state, much as in the Ottoman Empire, in both cases contributing to state expansion in a distinct yet broadly analogous manner to that described by Braddick for England, c. 1550–1640.[203] Yet, a little nuance is needed, lest we either overstate the importance of the imperial centre or conflate 'Mughal law' with 'law in Mughal India'.[204] In the first place, the law may have been *communicated* from above – from the imperial court, through legal or legal-cum-sacral texts, and via the offices of state-appointed judges – but it was *shaped* in very real respects from below, through the myriad encounters people from all walks of life had with legal documents and processes. The assimilation of *qazis* into the Ottoman and Mughal states did not quite remove them from local influences and make them instruments to help regularise or standardise Islamic law in the land. Their courts were also spaces for the 'archiving of justice' (including judgements and legal opinions), so that a *qazi* in a particular place could refer back to his predecessors, reinforcing the power of locality.[205]

And this is to say nothing, secondly, of the fact that there was no single legal tradition or even a single legal system, but such a multiplicity that we can speak of 'legal pluralism'. To make sense of this, it is worth remembering that Islamic law (*sharia*) and Hindu law (*dharma*) were not universally agreed upon. There were variations in legal opinion across the Muslim world, not to mention changes in how the *sharia* was operationalised over time, and the same was true of *dharma*, with special rules for particular castes, regions, and kingdoms. This meant the everyday legal sphere was inherently layered and multifarious in early modern India, even before we consider the monarch's power as a lawmaker and the state's jurisdiction over administrative and penal matters (*zawabit*), dropping like 'gentle rain from heaven', and the manifold customs of local communities pushing up from below.[206] The Mughal legal order as represented by the *qazi* co-existed with other, often localised juridical institutions, making it much like its Ottoman cousin in this respect: corporate merchant bodies (*mahajans*), caste-based groups (*panchs*), urban corporate institutions (*nagarsheth*), community heads, and *mahalla* elites.[207] They overlapped, as we shall see, and there does not seem to have been a 'conception of a hierarchy of fora', Sumit Guha argues; 'instead there was a rough idea of the ranking of disputes in order of magnitude.'[208] The fact of such 'legal pluralism' meant that, as Farhat Hasan puts it, 'the legal domain in the Mughal period was in excess of the state'.[209]

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[202] Kaicker, *The King*, 107.

[203] Al-Qattan, 'Courthouse', for the Ottoman side of things.

[204] Hasan, 'Law', 398–99. Or, more precisely, the imprint destined by the reigning monarch, for Aurangzeb's initiative was a reflection of his stance, for example. See, also: Hasan, *Paper*, for a fuller explication of these ideas. On the latter distinction (Mughal law/law in Mughal India): Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, 38–40.

[205] Al-Qattan, 'Courthouse'.

[206] Lefèvre, 'Mughal Legal Ideology', 116–18.

Let us focus on *qazis*, nevertheless, for they could be found in urban centres across the varied domains of the Mughal state and probably constituted the most consistent feature of the legal landscape (§4.2.2–§4.2.3).[210] The local *qazi* was supported by the *kotwal* and *faujdar* (military-police officials) and was under the purview of the *sadr* (who oversaw religious and, derivatively, all judicial affairs in the empire). The execution of his duties was subject to oversight, therefore, as well as being moulded by Mughal directives, including those to be attentive to local customs and social structures. His post was an official appointment, meaning the emperor also had the power to remove a *qazi* from office when his rulings were at odds with imperial interests.[211] Akbar, for instance, dismissed a *qazi* who defied his wishes to acquit a Brahman of charges of blasphemy, instead ordering his execution, while Aurangzeb dismissed the *qazi* who refused to convict Dara Shukoh of heresy.[212] More commonly, Mughal *qazis* – like their Ottoman counterparts – dealt with such issues as registering rights and notarising transactions (sales, mortgages, gifts), matters of inheritance, marriage contracts with or without a guardian, settlement of law-suits, and so forth. They also meted out punishments to wrongdoers and – in their capacity as pillars of local Muslim society – were meant to induce proper religious observance and righteousness among the people.[213] As magistrates, they admitted pleas, reviewed witness and documentary testimony, and then consulted with experts in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) known as *muftis*, who issued an opinion (*fatwa*, pl. *fatawa*). Following the compilation of the *Fatawa-i Alamgiri*, the *mufti*'s opinion may or may not have taken its cue from that text; we do not currently know how and how far the *Fatawa* impacted such decision-making. Furthermore, *qazis* were free to follow or disregard a *mufti*'s opinion – or even to seek further opinions – before making their rulings, which were recorded by a scribe.[214]

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[207] Hasan, 'Law', 404; Gradeva, 'Court in the Balkans', 60–61. *C.f.* Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, 38–40.

[208] Guha, 'The *Qazi*', 107.

[209] Hasan, 'Law', 398. There were other aspects to legal pluralism emanating from the everyday experience of the law, for most people did not speak Persian, so legal documents scribed in Persian by Mughal *qazis* produced a 'legal order [which] was sustained by the obdurate persistence of oral, performative traditions in the textual habitus, and the co-existence of written statements with spoken pronouncements within a shared legal space' – Hasan, 'Law', 408. Similarly, on the multilingualism of the law: Chatterjee, *Negotiating*.

[210] Their status did change in the later Mughal period, however, at least in the Maratha-controlled west of India; see: Guha, 'The *Qazi*', 99–107.

[211] Chatterjee, 'Reflections', 405.

[212] Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, 174. See, also: Lefèvre, 'Mughal Legal Ideology', 120.

[213] Chatterjee, 'Reflections', 406–07. Gradeva, 'Court in the Balkans', for the Ottoman *qazi* in the majority non-Muslim context of Sofia.

In all but the business related to marriages, the majority of his attesters were non-Muslim, and these included women as well as men.[215] Such recourse to the *qazi's* court, rather than other juridical institutions available to non-Muslims, could be described as 'forum shopping' – a term denoting a plaintiff's search for the venue in which they were more likely to obtain the desired justice or best outcome. Although the Ottoman sultan's Jewish or Christian subjects did the same, it bears remembering that the Mughal state was 'overwhelmingly inclusive' from the point of view of its juridical institutions; Mughal legal institutions often 'ended up reinforcing the local norms and customary procedures' more usually associated with the courts for specific communities (e.g., the *panchs*) and other local powerholders.[216]

Nor were Mughal courthouses separated from the latter, who sometimes interrupted cases brought to the *qazi* and resolved disputes themselves, or else overturned the *qazi's* ruling by making their own. Now and again, the two were blended, either because they worked together, or because the *qazi* functioned to turn a text or record of testimony into a legal document, his seal imbuing it 'with a sanctimonious status.'[217] Much as Ottoman *kanun* and *sharia* and the boundary between them were not immutable, so the *qazi* was able to exercise latitude in his deliberations, fitting his understanding of Islamic law – or even preferring to make a decision based upon local custom – as suited local contexts and the maintenance of law and order, so that the *qazi* punished by Akbar is perhaps remembered precisely because this instance was so exceptional.[218] Ultimately, it was 'the need for secure commercial transactions, the smooth functioning of the state, and the resultant creation of entitlements,' Nandini Chatterjee argues, 'as well as a shared culture of Indo-Persian legal forms, that brought litigants into the ambit of these formally Islamic courts.'[219]

Besides the appearance of the revenue collector, it was in the *qazi*'s office that the emperor's subjects and foreigners – including European merchants – came face-to-face with the Mughal state.[220] Among the business brought to the *qazi* was the registration of rights to land or office and its associated emoluments, which were stated in a document known as a *mahzar*.[221] Thus, for example, when one Purshottam Das succeeded his uncle to the village headmanship of Dhar and related office in the late seventeenth century, he took care to have his family's long-standing and hereditary connection to these offices ratified, the confirmatory documents (*sanads*) held by one of his predecessors having been stolen before he came into his inheritance. In 1684, however, a challenger emerged and Purshottam Das was obliged to call on all those who could render their testimony to his ancestral claim in writing.[222] In the paper trail left by this dispute over hereditary rights to local office, the Mughal state appears not only as an entity disbursing salaries and offices within the revenue-bureaucratic system, but also in the form of the *qazi*, his office, and the legal process. Or, to look at it another way, the state not only manifested itself in these institutions, but was actually produced on a day-to-day basis through the recourse of petitioners like Purshottam Das to the office of the *qazi*; their interactions with one another, with scribes writing in Persian, as well as other parties drawn into the fray; not to mention the documents they created and archived for future reference, which manifested the state each and every time they were examined.

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[214] Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, here, 172–73, and the chapter as a whole for a rich picture of the *qazi's* lifeworld.

[215] Chatterjee, 'Reflections', 408–09; Hasan, *State and Locality*, 71–109.

[216] Hasan, 'Law', 405, for citation, and 409, for examples. On Ottoman forum shopping: Barkey, 'Legal Pluralism', Gradeva, 'Court in the Balkans', especially 60–61. See, also: Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, 158–62. For a case in which, vice versa, a Muslim called upon Brahmans to settle a dispute once and for all according to Hindu law: Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 145–50.

[217] Hasan, 'Law', 405. See, also: Chatterjee, *Negotiating*, 175–78.

[218] Eaton, 'Introduction' [2], 23.

[219] Chatterjee, 'Reflections', 403, for both citations.

[220] See, for instance: Veevers, *British Empire*, 143.

Combined with Aurangzeb's bureaucratisation of the law, two factors increased the traffic to the *qazi*'s office. Economic growth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced 'new social classes' who were less constrained by the narrow and 'particularistic norms and values' of their communities than established groups in possession of rights.[223] Eager to press their claims, they turned to – and thereby expanded the role of – the state. Another factor was the distribution and steady subinfeudation of rights through the Mughal classical age, for this created layers of complexity in which confusion and competition seeded itself. Precisely at the moment when the reach of Mughal authority began to wane, the Mughal legal order became more important as people brought disputes to the *qazi's* court. In fact, the crumbling of Mughal authority spurred the rush to confirm or contest – fraudulently or without basis, in some cases – rights and entitlements granted at some point by the Mughal emperor or his officers, motivated by the fear of a family's claims being dislodged amidst the political change in motion after 1707.[224]

Thus, somewhat paradoxically, such business kept Mughal sovereignty in repair in the eighteenth century and through the colonial transition. None of this is to say that *mahzars* or other writs were Mughal inventions, even if they took a specific form in the Mughal world on account of the realm's diversity; the former had a long pedigree in the Indo-Islamic world and were extant in such places as western and south India prior to the Mughal conquest. No surprise, then, that '*mahzar*-writing survived and flourished under the self-consciously Brahmanical Maratha Empire of the seventeenth century', and later in the Sikh kingdoms and the early Company state.[225] Nevertheless, what is significant is how such everyday encounters made the imperial state even as it decentralised. Reflexively, the processes of state formation in the localities and via the legal system that have been described in this section critically shaped the Mughal successor states, which necessarily had deeper local roots in consequence.

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[221] See, valuably: O'Hanlon, 'Petitioning'.

[222] Chatterjee, '*Mahzar-namas*', 379–82.

[223] Hasan, 'Law', 410.

[224] See, also: Chatterjee, '*Mahzar-namas*', 400–04, for the new lease of life granted to such documents through their use in polities as different as the Sikh kingdoms and the early Company state.

7.4 Beyond Decline: The Mughal Empire after the Death of Aurangzeb

The eighteenth century was a 'special time' in the history of Islamicate Eurasia. On the one hand, it witnessed a letting up of several centuries of dominion following in the wake of both Timur's conquests and the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal regimes moulded by those conquests in vital respects (see, e.g., §8.1). On the other hand, for the most part, the eighteenth century was a period in which European imperialisms were yet to be 'intimated by contemporaries'.[226]

The notion of a prolonged decline of the Ottoman Empire after defeat at Lepanto in 1571 is no longer tenable. The origins of this notion are to be found in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century declinist literature produced by Ottoman elites with their own literary, political, or other ends in mind, much as the talk of Portuguese *decadencia* in the later sixteenth century might also be read as a literary response to social realignments.[227] This has been accompanied by several decades of scholarship that has at once taken the Ottoman seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on their own terms, rather than seeing them in the shade of the classical age through Mehmed II's to Suleyman I's reigns, meanwhile emphasising the flexibility and extraordinary durability of the Ottoman state, which was dissolved only in 1922. Among the major developments brought to light by these studies was the so-called 'age of the *ayan*' or provincial notable, a broad catch-all for a complex, multi-faceted decentralisation of power and authority toward the provinces. As the centre renegotiated obligations – fiscal and military, in particular – with existing or newly-emergent powerholders in the provinces and localities, so power became lumpier still from the late seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries, not least because none of the new local regimes succeeded in overthrowing the emperor and his court.[228] The Safavids, by contrast, were toppled in 1722 yet their aura remained potent and magnetic for decades.[229] What, then, of eighteenth-century India (Map 7A)?

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[225] Ibid, 392, for citation, and 391–93, 395–96, for pre-Mughal and post-Mughal examples, and those from outside India, as well as subtle but important differences between these and the Mughal form of the *mahzar*.

[226] Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 6–7.

[227] Howard, 'Ottoman Advice'; Howard, 'Ottoman Historiography'; Faroqhi, *Approaching*, 144–56; Subrahmanyam, 'Written on Water', 63–64.

[228] Yaycioglu, *Partners*; Khoury, 'Ottoman Centre'. For a similar picture of Mughal western India: Nadri, *Eighteenth-Century Gujarat*; Hasan, *State and Locality*.

If we view the Mughal Empire from a top-down and centre-outward perspective, imbuing it with hegemony, then its shrinkage to the '*saltanat-i hindustan*', and eventually to Delhi and its environs, appears tantamount to collapse.[230] The eighteenth century appears as a 'dark age' and historians search for the causes of 'decline'. If, however, we see Mughal authority as resting upon the incorporation of a wide range of groups, not only servicemen but also local powerholders (zamindars, holders of *madad-i ma'ash* grants, etc) of varying antiquity or juvenescence, then we can read the eighteenth century rather differently. It was not primarily institutional maldesign or malfunction, and any resultant class conflict or factionalism at court, that caused the Mughal Empire's change of fortune. Neither was it due to any failings on the part of imperial personalities. Aurangzeb is usually mentioned in this regard, accused of spurring communal conflict by virtue of his zealotry and religious policies, though this has thankfully been given serious reconsideration in recent years. Nor was it due to the impotence of those numerous puppets or weaklings sitting on the Mughal throne after 1707 and the machinations of those pulling the strings, such as the Sayyid brothers.[231] None of these was a sufficient 'push', though each has been attributed as a factor by some historian or other.

There was the additional fact of local economic growth and prosperity that created the motives and opportunity – that 'pulled', in other words – *local elites* into those conflicts with the centre that precipitated its fragmentation. They were inclined by virtue of *their* personalities and aspirations to realising political voice or even authority on their own account and, in turn, conflicted with the centre as rights and responsibilities were renegotiated or wholly redrawn.[232] How this played out depended deeply on context, as Muzaffar Alam shows in a comparative study of Awadh and Punjab worth dwelling on for the riches it reveals about the process and dynamics of the supposed fall of the Mughal Empire and ascendance of the so-called 'successor states'.

Proximate to the imperial capital, Punjab and Awadh were closely integrated into the empire around the turn of the century, and were important economic zones in their own right but also gateways – bastions, too – to the eastern and western flanks of the empire and the trade and enemies that lay beyond. In the first phase, the *subadars* of these provinces arrogated for themselves and their followers the overlapping imperial offices (e.g., the *subadari*, *faujdari*, *diwani*), whose holders previously reported directly to the emperor and were appointed by him.[233] In effect, the governors centralised control in their own

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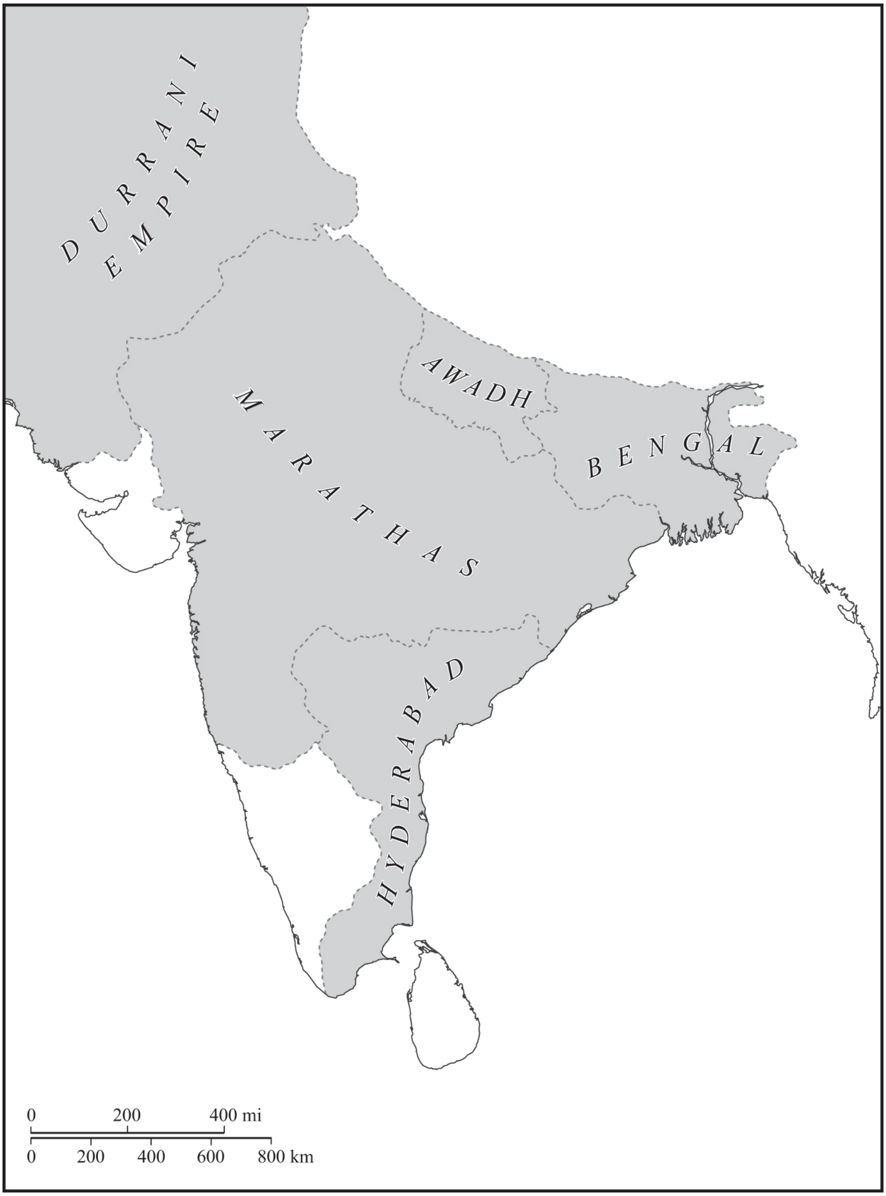
[229] Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 6, for citation.

[230] On the trope of the 'dark age' and subsequent revisionism, see: Bayly, *Rulers*, 43–46; Alavi, 'Introduction', 1–21.

[231] See, for instance: Chandra, *Parties and Politics*.

[232] Alam, *Crisis*, 40–41, 100–04, 140–44. See, also: Alam, 'Trade'.

[233] Alam, *Crisis*, 70–71, 89.


DURRANI EMPIRE
MARATHAS
AWADH
BENGAL
HYDERABAD
0 200 400 mi
0 200 400 600 800 km

Map 7A The Marathas and other Mughal 'Successor States', c. 1760 hands, bringing greater political stability but also amassing greater political power. In this, we can see the collapse of the old imperial structure, the alienation of control away from the emperor and his *wazir*, and the beginnings of regional centralisation. This was aided by the breakdown of communications between the centre and the provinces.[234] At the same time, enrichment led to greater assertiveness on the part of zamindars, pitching them in conflict with the Mughal centre and its local representatives, as well as holders of *madad-i ma'ash* grants, the latter holding pretensions of transferring their holdings into *zamindaris* proper, thus causing them to clash with the existing landlords.[235] Since each groups' aims remained parochial and their leadership narrow, they failed to gather a broad enough following and momentum, but caused considerable turbulence nonetheless (though not necessarily to the detriment of the economy and commerce). All this further weakened the imperial centre, with the further effect of emboldening local *jagirdars* to resist transfers to new *jagirs*.[236]

As bad as things were in Awadh, they were worse in Punjab, where the activities of the Sikhs under Banda Bahadur affronted or were injurious to certain zamindars and other local potentates (§2.4.4, §6.3.2), not to mention the imperial centre, thereby adding another layer of difficulty for all those involved in these contests – and success for no one. In this difference, Alam has located the path to the development of a successor state in Awadh and the absence of such a path or outcome in Punjab. Indeed, continued *zamindari* risings and the Sikhs' raids and other forms of hostile and violent opposition, combined with the effects of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah's campaigns into north India, and a quite possible economic stagnation in parts (or all) of Punjab, created near-constant disturbance.[237] Against this background, and given the conflict among Mughal officeholders in Punjab, there was little scope for regional centralisation, while Delhi's grip over the province practically slipped away.[238] By contrast, the governors of Awadh – Burhan-ul-Mulk and his successor, Safdar Jang – were in a strong enough position to take on the difficult task of renegotiating rights and obligations with the zamindars and holders of *madad-i ma'ash* grants. In this task, they naturally met with opposition, but were able to prevail, resulting in the creation of the Awadh *nawabi* in the years after 1722.[239] The *suba* became 'the *suba-i mulki* (home province) and the *subadari* much more than a mere administrative assigmment conferred by the emperor', instead becoming 'practically self-earned and permanent (*bil-istiqlal*),' and nearly hereditary, 'even though the governor was theoretically still a Mughal *subadar*.'[240]

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[234] Ibid, 91.
[235] Ibid, 105–10, 117–22.
[236] Ibid, 132–33.
[237] Ibid, especially 177–85, 294–95.
[238] Ibid, especially 196–203.
[239] Ibid, 204–24, 240–42.
[240] Ibid, 243.

Much like the regional centralisation seen in Ottoman Baghdad under Hasan Pasha – who likewise amalgamated the fiscal, military, and judicial powers, controlled revenue streams, and exercised a personal sovereignty while continuing to nod to Istanbul – a similar process and outcome is observable as Mughal provinces were turned into principalities.[241] This was the product of the charisma, leadership, and opportunism on the part of the founders of these new principalities, usually erstwhile *subadars* (e.g., in Awadh and Hyderabad), though the Bengal *nawabi* was founded by the former Mughal *diwan*.[242] For its part, the imperial centre lamented the *mufsid* and *zortalab* (mutinous or rebellious) provinces, with the sources also speaking of *fitna* (or *fitva*, in Maratha sources), a concept with varying and often conflicting uses in the documentary record that André Wink thankfully clarifies and expounds. From the perspective of an entity like the mature, eighteenth-century Mughal state, *fitna* involved the rebellion or sedition by zamindars and gentry expected to be subservient to the centre.[243] *Fitna* – as the forging, breaking, and switching of political alliances – had been just as vital to the expansionism of the early Mughal state, however; the same was true of the Mughals' rivals aspiring for a greater share of political power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While the emperor sought to deny *fitna*, therefore, his 'right to the land was merely one of the concurrent rights in the shifting structure of sovereignty.'[244]

We shall return to Wink's thesis, but one larger implication of his and Alam's contributions is that political competition between central and local powerholders was neither the effect nor the cause of economic stagnation and decline. On the contrary, it was precisely because of sustained prosperity, even growth, that actors pursued the contest over rights and the sphere of authority.[245] These ideas may now seem uncontroversial, but they represent the fruits of a radical revisionism undertaken from the late 1970s.[246] Until then, the view ready-made and received from Mughal court historians, as well as those attached to the early colonial state, painted the eighteenth century as a time of disturbance, internecine conflict, or chaos; such characterisation was variously self-serving and endured for well over two centuries.[247]

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[241] Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 7.

[242] Alam, *Crisis*, 58; Faruqui, 'Hyderabad'.

[243] Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 28.

[244] Ibid, 154.

[245] See, for instance: Alam, 'Eastern India'; Alam, *Crisis*, 247–55.

[246] Alavi, ed., *Eighteenth-Century*; Marshall, ed., *Eighteenth Century*, both offer excellent guides to the changing historiography.

[247] Writers in each group peddled this line for their own reasons, to justify the colonial takeover, it turns out in the latter case; see: Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', for a rich guide to Mughal historiography.

The successor state system described in this section was recognised as competitive, but the revisionists tried to highlight the containment of 'internecine conflict'. See, for a sense of political relations between Awadh and its local and regional rivals, as but one example: Alam, *Crisis*, 262–78.

Alam, Wink, C.A. Bayly, and countless others in their wake paint a more optimistic picture. To do so, they make two manoeuvres. First: shifting their attention away from the Mughal centre and instead closely examining the political economy of particular eighteenth-century Indian states. Second: pinpointing pockets of localised prosperity and episodes of growth – linked to ongoing commercialisation, the spread of the cash nexus, and trade at various scales, as well as developments in revenue administration – rather than widespread and protracted economic malaise. By the same turn, however, their work highlights that patchiness and a lack of consistency were also characteristic of the late- (or post-) Mughal economy. Nadir Shah's invasion of 1739 and Ahmad Shah Durrani's successive campaigns interrupted economic life, for instance, but the worst effects were felt largely in Punjab and Hindustan, and even there recovery was quick.[248] Punjab might have been caught in the cross-fire between the Mughals, Afghans, and Sikhs, but the establishment of Afghan rule in the western part of the province seems to have contributed to a stabilisation and even expansion of commercial activity from about the mid-century.[249] Bengal and Rajasthan seem to have enjoyed a period of growth in the first-half of the eighteenth century, but this belies the shifting distribution of economic activity in response to such factors as environmental change (e.g., the movement of riverbeds) or the expansion or collapse of local states and systems of patronage, resulting in the migration of field labourers and economic specialists (e.g., bankers, merchants, artisans) from less to more prosperous centres within these same regions.[250]

Mughal sovereignty did not deny so much as shade the sovereignty of lesser kings under the umbrella of its 'paramountcy' (to borrow a term from the political lexicon of colonial India).[251] Those dynasts whose homelands had been designated as *watan jagirs* by the Mughal *padshahs* hence did not carve out new states – as in Bengal, Awadh, or Hyderabad – but simply reasserted their autonomy, renegotiated their obligations, and redirected their loyalties vis-à-vis the imperial centre. Major Rajput kingdoms of long-standing – such as Marwar, Mewar, and Amber – belong in this category, but so, too, do several newer principalities. As military contractors and servicemen were rewarded with *jagirs* or else 'ploughed back the proceeds of imperial service and temporary *jagirdari* holdings into their home territories, acquiring *zamindari* holding by grant, conquest, or colonisation of waste', so 'the Bhumihars of Banaras, the Bais of central Awadh, and the Rohillas in Kutheir and Farrukhabad' created or extended their own compact principalities and centres of more or less independent political authority.[252] As in the Ottoman Empire, where arriviste rulers modelled themselves after the large Ottoman households and were comparatively more deferential to the centre, these Indian states mimicked the *mansabdari-jagirdari* military-fiscal apparatus of the seventeenth-century Mughal Empire, while also adapting its court rituals, symbols, and artistic and architectural styles (§9.3).[253] A number of these states and their rulers had deep local roots, whether in terms of landowning or other sources of lordship – such as being lineage heads – as well as shared ethnic ties with the wider community.[254] Some were elevated to the imperial nobility (like the al-ʿAẓm family in Ottoman Syria), but the old imperial centres failed to incorporate others to their detriment, the Marathas being a stand-out example.[255]

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[248] Marshall, ed., *Eighteenth Century*, here 14, and 13–19, for a useful overview of regional economic trends.

[249] Lally, *Silk Roads*, 87–98.

[250] See, for instance: Sethia, *Rajput Polity*; Rao, *Rural Economy*.

[251] See, also: Sood, 'Mughal Paramountcy'.

[252] Bayly, 'Epilogue', 168, for citation. See, also: Gommans, *Indo-Afghan*, 104–59.

Aurangzeb's failure to bring Shivaji into the fold notwithstanding, Wink identifies three continuities between the Maratha polity and its Mughal predecessor. These demonstrate how the 'Marathas and other gentry groups' (e.g., the Bundelas, Bhumihars, Jats, Rajputs, and Sikhs), 'seem to have benefitted from an enduring Mughal overlordship in a variety of ways, rising to prosperity with it and gathering strength from it so as to be able to eventually create rival foci of autonomous power with close links to agrarian society.'[256] The second was in the appropriation of political and administrative terminology and practices; the usurpers, in other words, could erect their authority upon effectively functioning institutions honed by a succession of Indo-Muslim states.[257] Having moved into the space vacated by the Deccan Sultanates, and with the founder's origins in Deccani state service, the early Maratha polity was a natural part of the Indo-Islamicate world and the repertoire of techniques and institutions available to its rulers, even if Hindu nationalist writers have taken great pains to present Maratha rule as Hindu and 'indigenous' (whatever that means).[258] Maratha expansion into the former Mughal domains of Khandesh, Gujarat, and Malwa, likewise, led not to a wholesale change in administrative forms, for Stewart Gordon reminds us that 'the terms of reference remained severely Mughal', with the Marathas even retaining Mughal fiscal practices and precedents (e.g., charging Hindu traders double their Muslim counterparts or never making a revenue demand of cultivators more than twice what the Mughals had asked).[259] The Marathas directly contested Mughal authority, but nonetheless appropriated aspects of the Mughal state apparatus – all the way down to the operation of courts and rural and urban policing, in fact. The Sikhs, likewise, developed their own community institutions and opposed Mughal authority even as they continued to use Mughal administrative structures, practices, and technologies – including the dispensation of *sharia* justice or the use of Persian.[260]

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[253] Khoury, 'Ottoman Centre'.

[254] Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 9–10.

[255] Gordon, *Marathas*, 70–72, 77–79.

[256] Ibid, 7, for citation, and 57–66, for a detailed account of this process.

[257] Ibid, 7.

[258] See: Gordon, *Marathas*, especially 80–81 and 178–81, for explicit statements of how (not) to characterise the Maratha state in light of much work that tries to paint them as 'proto-nationalist' or as an 'indigenous empire', as well as other, older clichés in the historiography.

[259] Gordon, *Marathas*, 143–44.

Third and finally, and despite their opposition to the Mughals, the Marathas posed 'as the servants of the Mughal emperor'.[261] They commonly described their other rivals' actions as *fitva*, some of whom were (nominal) Mughal *mansabdars*, to the effect that the Marathas were calling out disloyalty and sedition where they saw it (and where it was expedient for them to do so).[262] This is because sovereignty was built upon political allegiances, not merely effected by an army or reflected in territorial possession, to the extent that Maratha sovereignty was interlocked with that of the Mughals as well as countless other major and minor potentates.[263] Quite late into its existence, the rulers of the Maratha state continued to co-operate with Delhi and accepted the protective cover and symbolic windfall of a position under the carapace of Mughal sovereignty.[264] 'Maratha *fitna*', Wink argues, 'thus left intact the fiction of Mughal plenitude of power.'[265] If part of what happened in the eighteenth century was an involution of the Mughal state and the irruption of new powerholders (e.g., the Marathas, Sikhs, and Afghans), then it helps to recognise the intrinsic connection of both processes, for 'what is called the "decline" of the Mughal Empire is merely the other side of this process' of *fitna* in the sense of securing concessions and forming new alliances leading to the establishment of new political centres.[266] In this way, we can explain how the Mughal centre rapidly gave way to alternate political centres over the eighteenth century yet survived intact, albeit diminished in territorial extent and power.

Alternately, we might describe the later Mughal period as a time of 'regional centralisation', as Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have it, or borrow from Ottoman history and characterise it as a time of 'centripetal decentralisation', which usefully captures the continued relevance – sometimes even the political and ideological magnetism – of the historic imperial centre.[267] True, this lasting appeal of the Mughal throne was generally born of many of the new regional rulers' failure to emerge 'strong enough to be able to win the allegiance of others and then replace the imperial power.'[268] True, any centripetal pull weakened through the century, not least on account of the destabilising effect and dent to imperial prestige caused by Nadir Shah's invasion and its aftermath. Around then, the rulers of Awadh and Hyderabad felt it was time to sever some of their shows of fealty to the centre by ceasing to pay tribute, this decision standing as a powerful indication of their confidence and political independence.[269] A similar change had taken place by this time elsewhere, too: 'Alivardi Khan in Bengal, the [Sikh] *misl* leadership in Punjab, Ali Muhammad Khan in Rohilkhand, and the Peshwa Baji Rao in his Maratha territory were all busy consolidating their holdings', to the extent that a shift in relations with the centre was palpable.[270] Yet, despite all this, relations were not severed entirely. For instance, Hyderabad's rulers lost little from maintaining a link to the centre, gained by remaining part of a prestigious cultural milieu, and were distant enough that hardly anything was expected in return, while Awadh's rulers benefitted from the opportunities for alliance making.[271] The Mughal centre had been the safest bet when they needed to legitimise their spoils – but, long after that, it remained intact and not supplanted so much as slightly marginalised.

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[260] Marshall, ed., *Eighteenth Century*, 6.

[261] Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 33, for citation, and 34–51, for a detailed discussion of this thesis.

[262] Ibid, 33.

[263] On the 'king's co-sharers', as he terms the various local or minor holders of revenue rights with whom Maratha sovereignty was interlocked: Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 157–292.

[264] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 57–68.

[265] Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 39.

[266] Ibid, 154–55, for a summary of his thesis.

[267] See: Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction', 31, for discussion and references.

[268] Alam, *Crisis*, 16, for citation, and also 53–55.

Many of the new polities arising from the dereliction of the Mughal imperium can thus be called 'successor states'. The value of this concept becomes clearer when considering the Durrani Empire – an eighteenth-century state formed by 'outsiders' to the Mughal system (Pashtun tribesmen), located beyond the imperial core (in the Safavid-Mughal borderlands), and whose leader (Ahmad Shah) even sacked the imperial capital and extracted the Mughal centre's acceptance of his suzerainty in 1757. At its height, the Durrani imperium extended from eastern Iran, across Afghanistan, and over Punjab and Sindh. Its ruler espoused a universalism that imitated Mughal imperial ideology of the seventeenth century (§7.4), but direct control was, in reality, combined with tributary relations to yield a fairly lumpy topography of power, much like sixteenth-century Kotte and numerous other early modern 'empires'.[272] Its origins have been linked to tribal breakout (§1.3.3), which involved the uprising by Afghans of the Hotaki tribe who toppled the Safavid centre and ruled ineffectively for some years until Nadir Shah was able to seize power, install a Safavid descendant as a puppet, and form an alliance with the Pashtun tribal leader, Ahmad Shah – whose own grouping were the regional rivals of the Hotakis – to snuff out the last vestiges of the threat from the Iranian frontier, before advancing into north India in 1739. In fact, Ahmad Shah Durrani's political career after Nadir Shah Afshar's death has been called a 'second tribal breakout', because it was predicated on a major alliance of Pashtun tribes struck in 1747, and has been arranged alongside the Afsharids (Nadir Shah's short-lived dynasty) and the Zands as tribal confederacies reflecting a final kind of eighteenth-century regime in Islamicate Asia.[273]

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[269] Faruqui, 'Hyderabad', 18, which spells out how and why this process unfolded differently in these satrapies, and *passim*, for analysis.

[270] Alavi, 'Introduction', 21–22.

[271] Abbott, 'Mulk', 485, which neatly summarises ideas posited by Munis Faruqui and Muzaffar Alam.

[272] Biedermann *et al*, *Global Gifts*, 90.

[273] See: Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 10–11, for the comparative angle.

Yet, this characterisation is flawed in two respects.[274] In the first place, it ignores the deep embeddedness of the Durrani enterprise within north India, for Ahmad Shah's nativity was in Punjab and thus he had familial connections to the area around Multan, not to mention with those Afghan pastoralists, mercenaries, and merchants who plied the networks of caravan trade between north India, Afghanistan, central Asia, and the frontiers of the Romanov and Qing empires. In addition, he had the support of Indian magnates and Mughal political elites, who effectively invited him to challenge Mughal authority, much as Punjab's elites had invited Babur to contest Lodi rule over two centuries prior. Its origins may have lain at the tribal frontier, yet, secondly, the outcome was very much a state resembling its Mughal predecessor, not least in terms of the patronage of literary, legal, and religious specialists as part of the creation of an Indo-Islamicate polity. Unlike the Wahhabiya, a roughly contemporaneous regime in central Arabia 'based on tribal solidarity and religious fervour,' and 'aggressively opposed to the Ottoman empire and its dynasty', the Durranis portrayed their campaigns as a jihad in the sense of morally reviving what had been lost by the corruption or ruination apparent in the late Mughal state, but were not anti-Mughal as such (§6.3.1).[275]

7.5 Conclusion

To conclude, it is worth teasing out one of the threads woven through the present and previous chapters on the sources and exercise of temporal power, not least because of its bearing on the exploration of kingship that follows. Through each of these chapters, we can see the shadow cast by Turko-Mongolic empire, whether in the form of institutional precedent, a shared heritage or 'imperial repertoire', or the more exclusive preserve of a dynastic connection to Chinggis Khan and Timur.[276] But how was 'Turko-Mongol' understood by contemporaries and what valence did it hold for them? Ali Anooshahr examines these issues by focusing on sources penned by sixteenth-century Persian(ate) litterateurs, some in the service of newly-established imperial patrons and each in pursuit of an agenda.[277] 'Persian historical narratives', he stresses, fundamentally 'reified and attempted to construct stable categories such as "kings," "dynasties," and the "foundation of a state" out of chaotic military-political events', thereby refashioning *ghazi*s and warrior bands into 'founders' and 'warrior kings'.[278]

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[274] The discussion here draws on: Lally, 'Beyond "Tribal Breakout"'.

[275] Sood, *Islamic Heartlands*, 11, for citation. Ahmad Shah Durrani's official history presented the Mughal '*saltanat*'s "traditions, institutes, and regulations" (*aʾin wa qawaʾid wa qawanin*), established in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by "the great emperors" (*badshahan-i ʿumda*),' as having 'now "gone to ruin" (*barham khwurda*)', necessitating Durrani salvation – Abbott, 'Mulk', 479.

[276] The phrase 'imperial repertoire' owes to Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*, 3.

[277] Anooshahr, *Turkestan*.

[278] Ibid, 3.

An examination of Mughal as well as Ottoman and Safavid works, and even those produced for Shibanid and Mongol rulers *within* central Asia, 'shows how Turko-Mongol origins had to be constructed or modified even in Turkestan, the alleged *Urheimat* of these war bands-cum-dynasties.'[279] At stake is not whether Turko-Mongolic institutions actually formed a precedent drawn upon by imperial dynasts – for their forms were doubtless influential – but the fact that the explicit expression of Turko-Mongolic or Turkic heritage, and connection to Turkestan and central Asia, were among a range of literary tropes placed in the service of 'aristocratic lineages in need of a proper family tree, cultural significance, and overall legitimation for their newfound power.'[280] This process arguably reached back to Timur's reign, for he balanced ruling in the name of Chinggis' descendants, thereby accessing the lineage's legitimacy and charismatic authority, with the steady 'Persianisation' of royal authority, a move intended to counter the charge that the Chinggisids were infidels who – failing to convert to Islam – had allowed Buddhism, Christianity, and shamanism to flourish.[281]

The Ottomans sometimes drew deeper connection with their Turkic heritage, often during times of political precarity, as we shall see in the next chapter, at other times drawing glory and grandeur from connection to non-Turkic empires ruling over Asia Minor.[282] The Shibanids, meanwhile, possessed Chingissid descent and had defeated the Timurids to lay claim over Transoxiana around 1500. Yet, they were eager to disassociate themselves from their image as uncivilised barbarians and their realm as devoid of good government – that is, to shed those negative qualities associated with their 'pagan' Turko-Mongol heritage. To do so, the jurist and historian, Fazl Allah b. Ruzbihan Khunji Isfahani, authored the *Mihmannamah-i Bukhara* ('The Bukharan Guestbook'), in which he transferred all these qualities onto the Shibanids' Kazakh neighbours and rivals. At the same time, he made explicit the Shibanids' royal and Islamic credentials to win the favour of their new (Muslim) subjects and painted the Shibanid domains as a paradise of plenty, civility, and good government.[283] Another key text was the work of a prince ejected from Inner Asia and forced to restore his dignity in India – the *Tarikh-i Rashidi* of Mirza Haydar Dughlat. Here, too, Anooshahr finds that Turko-Mongolic origin and identity 'always deferred to another place, to another people, or to another time', because it could be at once 'a source of pride and nostalgia as well as horror and embarrassment', both in central Asia and somewhere like India.[284]

All this points not only to the inherent instability and pliability of Turko-Mongol and Turkestan as concepts, but also to a critically important process of reinventing identities and origins toward the more appealing or persuasive expression of political authority, whether in the phase of establishing, consolidating, or shoring up – and even to contest – the power of a ruling regime. In a way, this returns us to where we started our examination of power: Ibn Khaldun's cyclical theory of rough-edged *conquistadores* and their inevitable self-refashioning in the mould of urban royalty.[285] Taking a broader horizon, we may even be tempted to see the sequence of states from the Delhi Sultanates and the Vijayanagara Empire, through their successors to the eventual engulfing by the Mughal Empire, and the latter's own shattering into successor states, as a repeated playing out of the Ibn Khaldunian political cycle, particularly once we overlay the distinct ecological zones – the arid and wet – onto the pared back world of rural civilisation versus the sophisticated complexity of urban civilisation at the heart of his synthesis.[286]

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[279] Ibid, 2.

[280] Ibid, 2.

[281] Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 25–26.

[282] Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, 28–50.

[283] Ibid, 86, and 85–109 for the supporting analysis.

[284] Ibid, citations respectively on 114 and 135.

Cyclical theories seem even more plausible in light of Victor Lieberman's grand comparison of a sequence of roughly synchronous political cycles or phases over mainland southeast Asia, France, Russia, and Japan in the millennium from c. 800.[287] Each cycle was characterised not by a repeat of what came before, but by a strengthening of the state, so that a plethora of small and fairly loose entities gave way to successively larger, more centralised, and better-integrated states, while the period of transition between cycles shortened from one to the next. Episodes of climatic change (both warming and cooling), the introduction of new crops and cultivars as well as overall agrarian expansion and its side-effects (e.g., environmental degradation), commercialisation linked to trade, and the unequal advantage accruing to those able to harness new military technologies all feature in Lieberman's explanation of these cycles, much as they have in the present and previous chapters.[288]

Whether these ideas can help better understand Indian states and empires in the *longue durée*, and their implications for early modernity as a useful concept (or not), deserve more careful attention.[289] Among the draws of Lieberman's empirical synthesis is that each cycle is not merely a reversion or re-enactment; rather, states become more culturally, socially, and economically integrated, more administratively centralised, and yet much larger in extent in each phase. Application of Ibn Khaldun's thesis, however, has the tendency to reduce political change to an inevitable 'rise', 'fall', and repeat.[290] One problem is the notion of 'decline', which has been especially unpalatable to modern historians of the Mughal and other Asian empires for reeking of Orientalism and the allied notions of Muslim dynastic states as Oriental despotisms, their supposed moral and political corruption, and their ultimate stagnation.[291] Knowledgeable of Ibn Khaldun's thesis, Ottoman and Mughal dynasts and their writers – wary of imperial decline being seen as inevitable – in fact modulated his ideas as they presented their own histories.[292]

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[285] Cyclical theories of various sorts were prevalent in the medieval Islamic world as thinkers sought to explain dynastic change; see: Anooshahr, *Ghazi Sultans*, 100–17.

[286] *C.f.* Fischel in *Local States*, who emphasises that the early modern south followed 'the opposite historical trajectories in comparison with north India' (239) when it came to the evolution of the state, preferring the idea of the mirror image to the prospect that the political cycle might have been out of sync.

[287] These polities were in the so-called 'protected zone', whereas India and China belong in what Lieberman calls the 'exposed zone' (exposed, it should be noted, to frontier warriors), such that the character of cycles in the latter regions differ somewhat from the former. India was precocious (like China, and relative to the 'protected zone'), in the sense that state-formation advanced more quickly, but less stable. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii.

[288] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. i, e.g., 248–58, but see also the references throughout Chapters 4–6 of this book. Lieberman is also attentive to cultural consolidation in the making of successively stronger states, evidence of which is examined in Chapter 9 of this book.

[289] Lieberman turns his attention to south Asia in *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii. Lieberman's thesis has been applauded and critiqued in almost equal measure; for the pitfalls identified by a historian of early modern India: Sreenivasan, 'Response'.

Yet, it may be productive to read his thesis and later Muslim historians' engagements with it not primarily as an empirical work, but as a form of rhetoric, for this reveals the value of cyclical theories and rise and fall narratives to imperial dynasts as they attempted to write themselves into the historical record and legitimise their authority. Thus, we find portrayal of conquest as a crusade for righteousness or jihad, or of the conqueror as a *ghazi* or saviour of the people from the moral corruption of existing rulers, but also discourses of civilisation brought by imperial rule in its maturity.[293] None of these formulations were unique to the Muslim world: the last, for instance, finds a parallel in Hinduised notions of universal monarchy that speak of erstwhile barbarians becoming civilised (by their Sankritisation), whose imprint can be traced well beyond India to southeast Asia.[294]

Our understanding of the Mughal state has gradually been enriched by innovations in how power is conceptualised. Older works remain valuable even if the consensus has shifted. Although foundational to the modern study of the Mughal Empire, a chief problem of Marxist economic analyses derives from their structural-functionalist character. The proponents of such approaches felt it necessary to first build up a portrait of the state and its institutions (e.g., the *mansabdari-jagirdari* system), often by using the words of some of the state's own architects as well as ideologues at the Mughal centre, before confronting the supposedly inevitable deviation from this ideal type. The result was to overdetermine 'crisis', whether by relying on imperial sources or by those penned by outsiders with their own axes to grind or preconceptions to offload, something revisionist historians of the Ottoman post-classical age have also perceived and to which they have drawn our attention as part of the reframing of the long Ottoman 'decline'.[295] The approach taken by Marxist-structuralist historians also gives credence to a rise-and-decline model of empire, for periods of expansion and institutional development and consolidation reach a climax or turning point ahead of inevitable collapse. Such an approach has, in hindsight, also been too narrow, overlooking the social and cultural history of the institutions under the spotlight (e.g., the bureaucracy), or else marginalised the importance of what might be classified not as institutions in the sense of structures so much as practices (e.g., peripateticism, rituals of incorporation).

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[290] Relatedly, see: Alavi, 'Introduction', 7, for an assessment of J.C. Heesterman's ideas about cycles.

[291] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Introduction'.

[292] Wink, 'Post-Nomadic Empires'.

[293] On the civilising process, we have Gomman's thesis, inspired by Norbert Elias, whereby *ghazis* were transformed into *mirzas* in Mughal literary production, as described in the previous chapter. But see, also: Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 56 and n.3, for the grains of an idea about the civilising influence of the 'Timurid cultural renaissance' and contemporaries' awareness of it. Babur's sense of his rule, as a Timurid, as a gift to Hindustan comes to mind.

[294] Scott, *Art*, 99, 111–13.

Against the image of the Mughal state as a leviathan, more recent work has seen Mughal sovereignty as layered and stacked, political authority as spatially lumpy, and power as both diffuse yet fissiparous.[296] The *padshah* did not eradicate lesser kings, but merely presided over them, while also permitting – sometimes by virtue of being powerless to stop – the steady subinfeudation of the realm and the creation of new *zamindaris*. The centre was not always able to impose its will, but instead bargained and negotiated with actors, some of whom held the power to contest its authority. Its presence was not only met in the person of the *mansabdar* or at the end of his sword, but, more often, in the writ of the law and the office of the *qazi*. All this meant that the existence of a large and growing number of powerholders ready to renegotiate rights or contest central control but, equally, equipped to stand up for their king, as Shahjahanabadis did in 1739. At the same time, it provided arriviste rulers and more established powers with a set of royal, military, and bureaucratic institutions, practices, and vocabularies through which to build their own successor states. In fact, long after the Mughal state and its successors had been swept away by the British, the appeal of the Mughal idiom of royalty remained strong, and so it is to kingship that the next chapter turns.

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[295] Hathaway, 'Problems'.

[296] Aside from vertical stacking, Zoltàn Biedermann's study of Iberian and south Asian regimes has yielded the 'Matrioshka principle', which may prove useful to Indian historians thinking about the relationship of the Mughal centre to other 'imperial' polities – such as the Maratha and Company states – in the eighteenth century: *(Dis)Connected Empires*, especially 28–30, 89–90.

8 Kingship

Upon founding India's state-owned international carrier in the 1950s, the government went on the lookout for a logo that would capture the essence of India. In the end, they chose not the *chakra* (wheel) emblazoned on the national flag, or an iconic beast such as the tiger or sacred cow, but a moustachioed, turbaned king performing his *salaam*. In one sense, this was deeply ironic, for India's kings had been pensioned off between 1947 and 1949, and at odds with the egalitarian spirit that impelled the absorption of the erstwhile 'princely states' – many of them post-Mughal successor states – into the secular and socialist new Republic. It also made perfect sense, however: Air India was to be the airline 'that treats you like a maharaja', and the maharaja had become a recognisable part of the image of India overseas.[1]

Some might be tempted to link kings and kingship with India's ancient past, turning for support to the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, India's greatest literary epics. Scions of India's erstwhile royal houses have, for their part, presented their kingdoms and much of their court culture as both antique and very much a product of their locality, not least because of the growing appetite for heritage tourism in the present day. That is often a deliberate conceit, however.[2] For much of what is recognisable as Indian royal tradition – the archetypal (or stereotypical?) moustachioed maharaja included – is the product of an amalgam of influences, local yet also 'global', and often forged only a few centuries prior. How, we might thus ask, did Indian kingly presentation evolve in the early modern period?

Akbar's reign was almost exactly coterminous with the Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I. His predecessors on the world stage included the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (r. 1519–56), and the Ottoman sultan, Suleiman 'the Magnificent' (r. 1520–66). The Mughal classical age overlapped with the Safavid efflorescence during Shah Abbas I's four decades on the throne (r. 1588–1629),

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[1] Copland, *Princes*, 1.

[2] To reveal this conceit necessitates studying courts and courtliness, which, Emma Flatt argues, was consciously neglected until recently: *Living Well*, 10–15, and *passim* for a study rooted in the Deccan sultanates.

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the transition from Ming to Qing rule over China, and the reign of Louis XIV in France (r. 1643–1715). This cursory sketch of the broader canvas of kingly authority in the early modern world is a reminder that an analysis of Indian kingship ought telescope between its local and global contexts, for the world – and thus its political centres – were in increasing contact with one another, with significant implications for how monarchs sought to project their power. At the same time, the presentation of each of these monarchs was also historically-reflexive, looking back to create something new and powerful in the present, while roving between the realm of the temporal prince and the divine or otherworldly.

Take, for example, Louis XIV. Born after his mother suffered a sequence of stillbirths in 1638, *Le Roi Soleil* (the Sun King) was considered divine, his very birth a miracle. By the time of his death, Louis' kingship had been performed through court ritual and portrayed largely in majesty or at war in painting, public sculpture, theatre, dance, and music in which he was variously cast – if not in his own human form – as the Sun or Apollo, as Alexander the Great or Hercules, prompting the statement that his reign had been a *grande spectacle*. 'A centralised state', Peter Burke writes in his now-seminal study of the Sun King, 'needs a symbol of centrality'. And therein lay the importance of presenting the king and his court as a 'sacred or "exemplary" centre for the rest of the state.'[3] The result was that the king and his courtiers carefully 'fabricated' the 'symbolic construction of royal authority' supporting the wider political projects of Louis' reign, namely, the growth and centralisation of royal power. We need not doubt that the king and his contemporaries believed in this fabrication; most of his subjects, after all, held him to be a sacred figure, his very touch thought capable of healing sufferers of skin diseases.[4] Although he was widely held to be a charismatic figure, his charisma nevertheless 'required constant renewal'; this 'was the essential aim of the presentation of Louis, on his stage at Versailles, as it was the aim of the re-presentation of the king in the media of representation.'[5] Yet, for all those who found in this image of royal power something compelling, or else obeyed their princes, 'there were the observers, moralists and satirists who viewed the glorification of the king as essentially a trick played on the public by cynical and time-serving flatterers' who sought to distract the king's subjects from politics.[6]

This chapter is about kingship in these senses of the symbolic construction of sovereign authority, the (re)presentation of royalty, and thus the ideology and image of monarchy. These concerns have steadily developed in the Mughal historiography thanks to the work of art historians, those attentive to material remains, and those expert in numerous languages capable of reading not only court chronicles, but also the writings of Sanskrit intellectuals and treatises by or about Sufi mystics, for instance. Burke's examination of the fabrication of

[3] Burke, *Fabrication*, 11.
[4] Ibid, 11.
[5] Ibid, 11.
[6] Ibid, 6.

Louis XIV's royal power pinpoints and defines a set of issues, a few of which have been addressed directly in the growing body of work on Mughal kingship, others more implicitly.[7] How – that is, through what media, means, and with reference to which ideas or concepts – was the king's authority fabricated? Who constituted the 'public' or audience to kingly (re)presentations, whose opinion was being moulded or manipulated? How were such opinions reinforced over the course of the king's reign, in which his glory was inevitably punctured by episodic defeat or failure? How were they reconstituted or transformed during transfers of power from one monarch to his successor? How was criticism of kingly authority voiced, by whom, and for what purposes?

Timur's larger legacy included a new, performative kind of kingship that his successors and their rivals readily engaged with, so it was fairly natural that the Mughal dynasty would not only make use of their lineage, but also (re-)affirm their charisma and articulate their kingly legitimacy through those modes given greater significance by their ancestor himself. Their genealogy was a potential goldmine, therefore, but also a burden and a noose, and so the first section of this chapter scrutinises how, when, and for whom looking back to the Mughals' prodigious descent from world conquerors served as a source of legitimacy and charisma. The second section shifts focus to the Indic context, looking at how Mughal kingship was fabricated from ideas, motifs, traditions, and rituals from within India or the larger Perso-Islamicate world of which it was part, whether the patronage of 'Indian' Sufi lineages or engagement with Hindu ideas of veneration, for instance. The result – whether new forms of architecture or portraiture, or new court rituals – was something identifiable in existing traditions yet novel in its concoction. The third section looks not to the past, but to the future, linking eschatological currents to the construction of sacred kingship and developing concepts of universal sovereignty. By considering the globe – as object and metaphor – in Tudor and Mughal painting, the fourth section pans out to consider the (re)presentation of Mughal universalism in the global arena.

8.1 *Sahib Qiran-i Sani* (Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction): The Timuird Inheritance

Victorious over the Lodi forces at Panipat on April 20, 1526, Babur proceeded to Delhi where he first paid 'homage at the tombs, gardens, walled suburbs, and mosques of Delhi's important kings,' essentially 'retracing his ancestor Timur's steps after the conquest of Delhi in 1398.'[8] Babur was, lest we forget, a Chaghatai-Turkic prince, being an agnate of Timur and of cognatic descent

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[7] Taking similar inspiration from Burke's approach is a recent history of Selim's kingly image as created (mostly posthumously) by later Ottoman writers; see: Çipa, *Making of Selim*, especially 111–250.

[8] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 118–19. See, also: Koch, *Collected Essays*, 164–82, on the Mughals' visits to Delhi from Babur's *tour de ville* to the construction of Shahjahanabad.

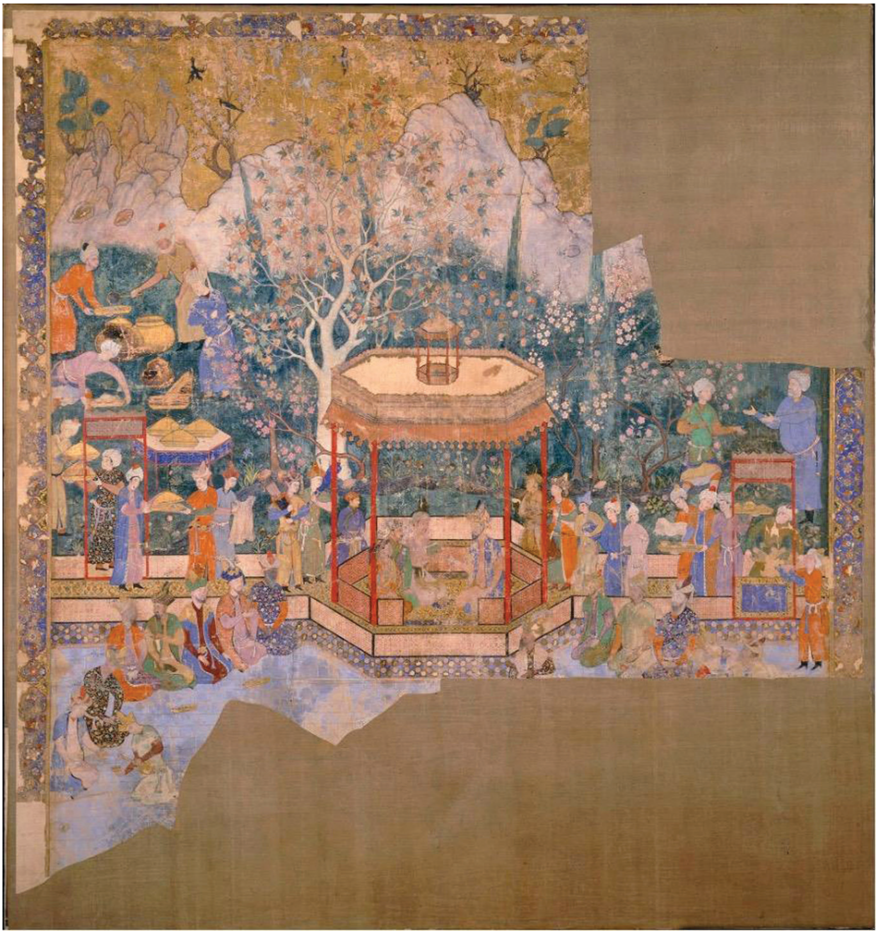

Fig. 8A Humayun Feasting in a Garden Pavilion (watercolour and gold; Mughal artists; c. 1550s with later additions)

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from Chinggis (Genghis) Khan. Babur and his comrades were traumatised by their forced exile from their native Tranosoxiana, Lisa Balabanlilar argues, and thus set about reifying Timurid courtly identity in north India to counter their sense of loss.[9] To commemorate his victory over the Lodis, Babur ordered the construction of the Kabuli Bagh Mosque at Panipat, built 1527–28. A mosque closer in style to those in Timurid Samarkand than those of north India – and completed with a *chahar-bagh*, among the first of many the Mughals and their nobles would lay out – this project also announced his Timurid credentials.[10]

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[9] Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity*, 18–70 being especially relevant to the present discussion.

Much as Versailles and its gardens were a stage for Louis XIV's kingship, so Persianate *chahar-baghs* served a similar role for Timur and his successors. These were gardens of fruit trees, sweet-smelling flowers, and herbs, often divided into four quadrants separated by water channels.[11] They grew in popularity in the Timurid heartlands in Iran and central Asia, where they served not only as spaces for sensuality and courtly pleasure, but also as the backdrop for the performance of Timurid kingship. It was in such surrounds that Timur held social gatherings (*majalis*) and granted audience to figures like Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, the Portuguese ambassador.[12] It was in such surrounds that Babur and his descendants would likewise perform their kingly selves. Babur, in fact, ordered Persianate *chahar-baghs* to be laid out in Agra and Dholpur not long after his conquest.[13] His son and successor, Humayun, can be seen feasting in a garden pavilion surrounded by courtiers and his own successors – Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan. The incorporation of these figures into the painting (Fig. 8A) long after its initial production also testifies to the power of visual representations of genealogy (described, below).

As the primary heirs of the Timurid legacy in Eurasia at large, and with their legitimacy being partly derived from Timurid referents, the Mughals inaugurated a Timurid renaissance on the Indian subcontinent.[14] To appreciate the magnetism of association with Timur is to reckon with the power of those concepts that steadily encrusted upon the image and discourse about the world-conquering king. When constructing his own charismatic authority, Timur melded 'Turko-Mongolian conceptions of authority based on charisma (*qul*) and Perso-Islamic notions of royal glory (*farr*), good fortune (*daulat*, *baxt*), and manifest destiny (*maqdur*)'.[15] The great conjunction of Jupiter with other planets was already observed and granted cosmic significance in pre-Islamic Iran, gradually becoming associated with the Persian heroes of popular literary tales before Timur's lifetime, who were described as the *sahib qiran* or Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction. Timur appropriated such folkloric associations but also cultivated a direct astrological claim to the title, for his birth date was commonly divined to have coincided with the conjunction of Jupiter and Mars.[16] After his death, use of the title grew – and not only among his heirs, for the Timurid imperial project had defined kingship across Islamicate Eurasia – even as a different conjunction began to hold especial power.[17]

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[10] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 120.

[11] The Timruid-style or Persianate garden ought not be reduced to the *chahar-bagh* alone, however, for this ignores the relationship of the four-quadrant space to other gardened landscapes as well as variants on the strict four-quadrant model itself. Nor ought the *chahar-bagh* be conflated with the mythical 'Islamic garden' or 'Paradise garden', for a wide range of layouts and designs abounded across the Islamicate world. See: Petruccioli, ed., *Gardens*, for such critique that also valuably sets Mughal gardens in a larger context. It also contains a translation of a rare Mughal gardening manual.

[12] Balabanlilar, 'Lords', 31; Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity*, 75–84.

[13] Maurya, 'Srinagar', 375–77. On the influence of Safavid and Mughal gardens upon those laid out by sub-imperial officers, in turn, see: Rehman, 'Garden of Nobility'.

[14] Dale, 'Legacy'.

[15] Chann, 'Auspicious Conjunction', 98.

Especially momentous was the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, the two most distant planets visible to the naked eye; it was calculated to occur only every 960 years. Though an astrological divination, it became a marker of historical time for some Muslims because of its gradual association with the supposed waning of Islam toward the end of its first millennium. The figure of the *sahib qiran* thus dovetailed with the *mahdi* (messiah) and *mujaddid* (renewer) as a saviour, someone who would transform the global temporal-political order, and thus someone whose appearance was perpetually awaited by Muslims (§3.3.5). A saviour could come in any number of guises: the title could be claimed by any individual, bestowed upon a fortunate military man or king, and contested by rivals (and their theologians).[18] In this cosmically and politically charged context, the Mughal dynasts and their courtiers did not hold back as they drew upon Timurid imperialism and connection to Timur.

With the passing of the millennium and eschatological expectations crackling out, the messianic current in Mughal kingly presentation was steadily dropped (a subject to which we shall return), much as in the Ottoman case, too.[19] What remained, however, was the wider Timurid repertoire of kingly authority. Thus, Timur's ceremonial title – *sahib qiran* – was transferred to the incumbent of the Mughal throne and used ever more widely, either by obsequious flatterers or the emperors themselves. A courtier named Maktub Khan called Jahangir a second Timur in a chronogram to mark his accession in 1605, for instance, an expression that delighted the new emperor, while Shah Jahan inscribed all his coinage with *sahib qiran-i sani* (Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction) upon his accession in 1627, thereby fixing a link to Timurid charisma.[20]

All this suggests a steady and subtly changing engagement with Timurid concepts and Timurid ancestry. At the outset of Mughal rule, it bears remembering, the Timurid inheritance was a double-edged sword: terrifying to Indians with received memories of Timur's conquests but awe-inspiring to others, the source of his apparent supernaturalism or superhumanism.[21] In south India, sheltered from the worst upheaval attending Timur's invasion, the Bahmani sultans capitulated to Timur and sought his 'certification' of their rule. Thanks to the patronage of Persian(ised) *ghariban* like Muhammad Gawan, furthermore, a Persianate Timurid-style court came wholesale into being, later replicated by the post-Bahmani successor states.[22] In north India, which had felt the brunt of Timur's invasion, things were a little different. Only when the dust had settled on Mughal conquests could the Mughal rulers derive some of their charisma and prestige from their Timurid pedigree, although it was never used to *justify* their rule.[23]

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[16] Ibid, here 93–99.

[17] Moin, *Millennial*, 27–55. See, also: Quinn, 'Timurid Historiographical Legacy'.

[18] Moin, *Millennial*, 29–31, 48–49.

[19] See: Menchinger, 'Dreams'.

[20] Balabanlilar, 'Lords', 7. Akbar hardly used the title, Jahangir but little, while Shah Jahan made full use of it: Chann, 'Auspicious Conjunction', 105–06.

[21] Anooshahr, *Ghazi Sultans*, 38–57, has lately drawn attention to Babur's 'disclaiming' of the Timurid inheritance in this context, favouring association with Sunni powers of high prestige, something also described in the next section of this chapter. See, also: Wink, *Indo-Islamic World*, 143–44.

Aside from making use of Timur's grand titles, not only *sahib qiran* but also *giti-sitan* (world conqueror), how else did the Mughals inject Timur's charisma into their own kingly presentation? The Mughal royal libraries housed accumulations of manuscripts that were scrutinised by successive generations of the imperial family and their courtiers, whose annotations and lifting of parts of the text into other works reveal how closely they were read. A variety of literary works steadily drew dynastic connections between the emperor – whether as the text's author (in the case of memoirs) or patron (chronicles, biographies, and genealogical scrolls or *silsilanamas*) – and his Timurid-Chinggisid ancestry.[24] Akbar, for instance, commissioned the *Chingiznama* ('History of Chinggis Khan'), an illustrated account of his ancestor (Fig. 8B).

Akbar also commissioned the *Timurnama* ('History of Timur'), which was written in c. 1584–86 by an anonymous author and has been almost entirely overlooked by modern historians (bar for the illustrations in the surviving manuscript copy).[25] Its significance is twofold, however. In the first place, it linked the Mughals to Timur and helped proclaim their inauguration of a new millennium upon the creation of a Timurid empire on the Indian subcontinent.[26] Second, it traced Akbar's superlative lineage to Adam through such Biblical figures as Noah, Methuselah, and Enoch, before turning to more proximate ancestors such as Timur. It perhaps served as a prototype for Abu al-Fazl, a high-ranking noble within Akbar's court, who drew a similar family tree in the *Akbarnama* before poring over Timur's majesty by iterating his various ceremonial titles.[27] It bears noting that the very use of imperial memoir as a guise for recording events reaches back to Timur himself, for biography and genealogy were part of his innovative repertoire of kingly authority, thus enhancing the power and pedigree of these genres, in turn.[28]

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[22] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 59–77; Sohoni, *Deccan Sultanate*, 29–31.

[23] Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 415–17.

[24] To this can be added mention of more immediate forefathers (e.g., Akbar looms large in Jahangiri texts) as well as Rajput kin and ancestors, although they are given proportionally little attention given how much more 'Rajput' the dynasty was becoming generation-by-generation, the fruit of numerous marriage alliances. See: Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 426–29.

[25] Melville, 'Akbar's History', for an important, new study of the latter, which is also known as the *Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriyya* (History of the House of Timur).

[26] Balabanlilar, 'Lords', 7. See, also: Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 418.

[27] *C.f.* Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 420–21.

[28] Lefèvre, 'Recovering', 458–59. See, also: Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 409–13.

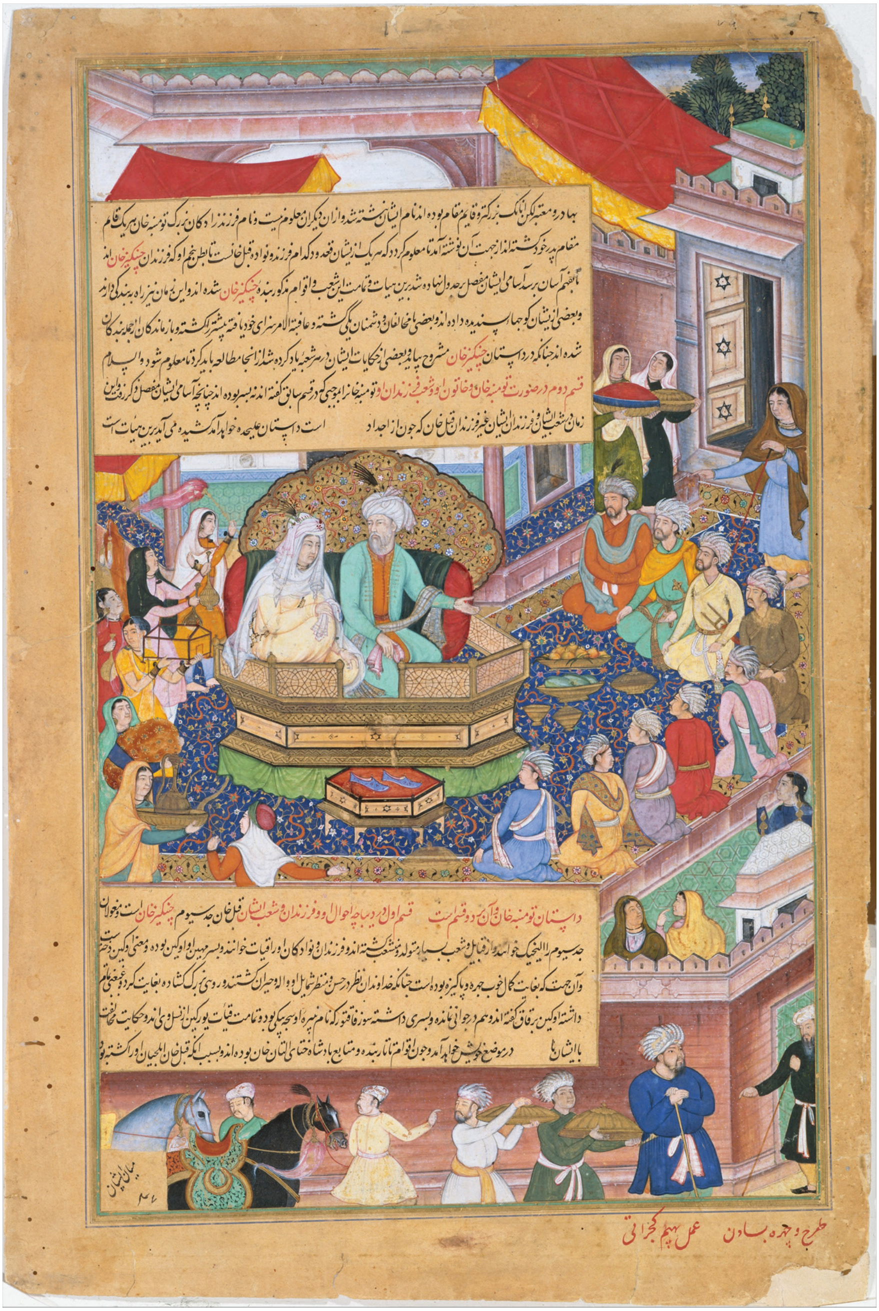
طرح و چهره بساون عمل بهیم گجراتی

Fig. 8B Ancestors of Chingiz Khan at their Court, from the *Chingiznama* (watercolour and gold; by the artists Basawan and Bhim; c. 1596)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 48.144

Today housed in Windsor Castle, in a rather different royal library from the one in which it was initially deposited, is the only surviving contemporary illustrated imperial copy of the *Padshahnama* ('Book of the Emperor'). Its text was written by the court historian Abdul Hamid Lahori (d. 1654), before the accompanying pictures were produced in the imperial atelier between 1630 and 1657/8.[29] Opening the book, the viewer takes in a magnificent frontispiece: a portrait of Timur. On the facing leaf: Shah Jahan, emperor, patron, and one of the protagonists of the *Padshahnama*. Timur seems to be passing a Timurid crown to his descendant, whose hand is outstretched to receive it.[30] The viewer-reader is thus immediately drawn into a direct and almost mimetic connection of the Mughal incumbent to his great ancestor, before turning the book's pages to read a detailed Mughal genealogy from Timur to Shah Jahan within a work setting out the political and ideological legitimacy of Shah Jahan's monarchy.[31] Image here precedes text, signalling the power of the visual and the place of visuality in the construction of Mughal authority.[32] In fact, pictorial genealogies (Fig. 8C), double-portraits of the emperor and Timur, and group portraits featuring the scions of the Mughal house with Timur seated centrally at their head were not uncommon outputs of the imperial atelier, often produced as loose-leaf pictures.[33] In time, the last of these types of picture formed prototypes for the Mughals' closest Rajput allies, the Kacchwaha rulers of Amber, who pictorially presented their own dynasty in this format, while something similar can even be found in the Deccan (Fig. 8D).[34]

Whether in text or image, in the exercise of princely duty or the performance of kingship, dynastic connection to venerable ancestors was thus powerful. More than a source of legitimacy, it was the wellspring of the Mughal ruler's charisma and authority. Dynastic connections were rather flexible, however. In the first place, rulers could emphasise particular connections to craft a particular sort of authority at particular moments in their reign, something Corinne Lefèvre highlights in her close study of Jahangir's memoir, which she

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[29] Beach and Koch, eds., *King of the World*, 13.

[30] 'Timur' and 'Shah Jahan' (watercolour and gold; unknown Mughal artist; 1650s), *Padshahnama*, fol. 2 (verso) and 3 (recto), respectively, Royal Collections Trust, Windsor Castle, RCIN 1005025.d and RCIN 1005025.e, which can be viewed online. Alternately, see: Beach and Koch, eds., *King of the World*, 25–27, for reproductions.

[31] Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 430–36.

[32] For a sense of the power of images among Mughal and Ottoman contemporaries, see, most recently: Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism*; Fetvacı, *Album*.

[33] See: Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 422–25.

[34] I am indebted to Ursula Weekes for directing my attention to two such pictures from Amber, one in the Jaipur royal collection, the other sold at auction at Sotheby's in 2021: 'Multi-Layered Identities: The Reception of Mughal Paintings by the Kachhwahas of Amber-Jaipur', paper presented at the Royal Asiatic Society, London, 8 October 2022, and also a personal communication with the author.

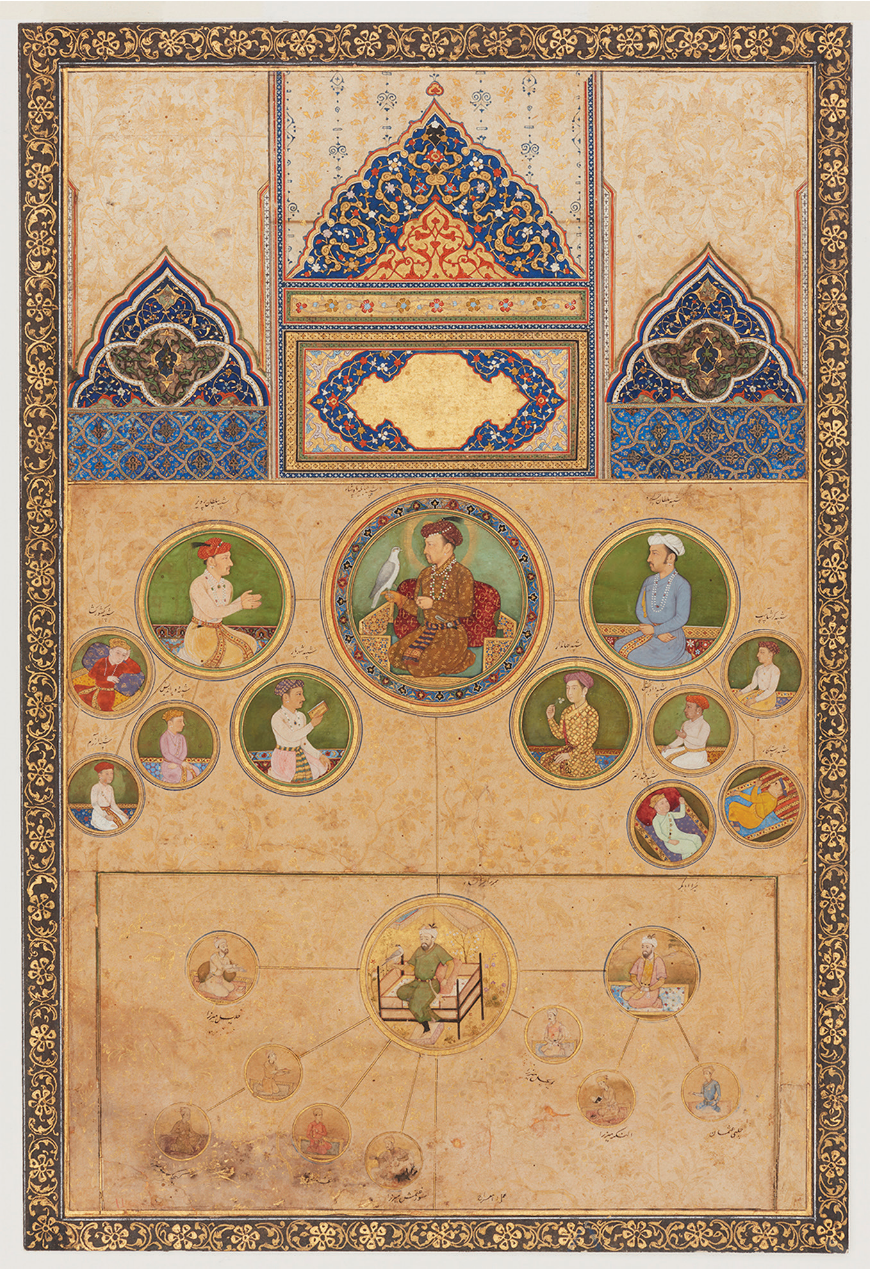

Fig. 8C Genealogical Chart of Jahangir (watercolour and gold; Mughal artist, c. 1610s–20s)

© The Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, AKM151

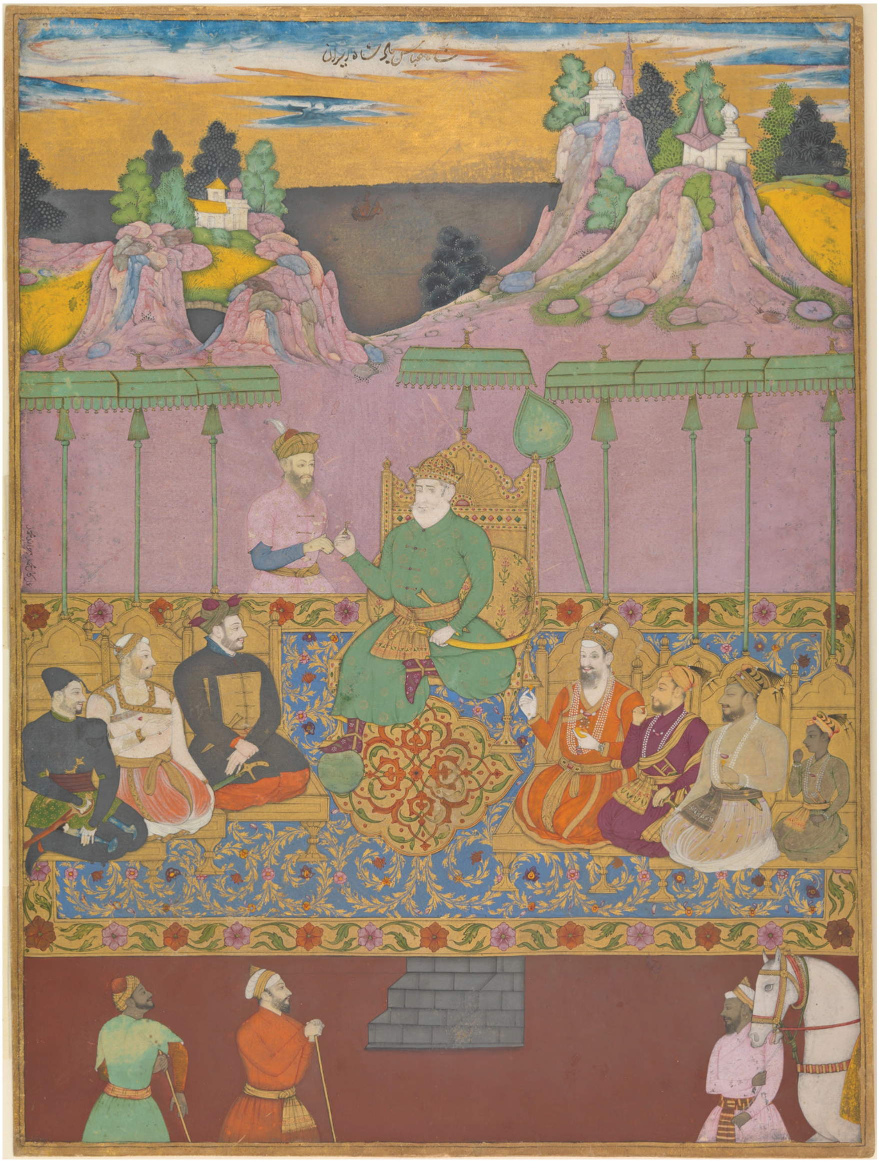

Fig. 8D The House of Bijapur (watercolour and metallic paints; by the Deccani artists Chand Muhammad and Kamal Muhammad, c. 1680)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1982.213

hails 'a masterpiece of Late Renaissance imperial propaganda.'[35] Both of the emperor's great ancestors were world conquerors, and his memoir, the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, certainly contains numerous references to Timur either in such role or else to establish a larger connection with the house of Timur. In the early and fragile years of his reign when we had no martial successes to speak of, and later, too, when the shape of his career placed him closer to the scholar than the warrior, Timur was perhaps not the predecessor with whom Jahangir wanted to forge a close link, however. Rather, it was to Chinggis Khan that he turned, for this ancestor was the purported author of a body of law – the *tura-i chingizi* – that offered a more fitting precedent to Jahangir's monarchy and its concern with ethics, justice, and law.[36]

If Jahangir sought to foreground his Chinggisid descent for its instrumental rewards, he simultaneously sought to distance certain figures more proximate to himself. Despite some 'references to Babur and Humayun', these largely 'pertain to the literary, naturalist, or bacchanalian traits of these rulers' characters rather than to their statecraft.'[37] By contrast, 'Akbar is often portrayed as inspiring, assisting, and legitimising Jahangir in his handling of political affairs,' at once giving gravitas to the latter's own monarchical career and allowing the new sovereign to capture part of his father's aura.[38] Beside the role of the good king as a juridical authority and master of statecraft, Jahangir emphasised protection of his subjects and securing their prosperity. This moored his overall vision of kingship in the norms of *akhlaq* literature, notably the work of Nasir al-Din Tusi, which he studied alongside his larger interest in the natural world.[39] In this presentation of his self to the world, therefore, is evidence of Jahangir's mooring his royal authority not so much in martial prowess and supernatural skill on the battlefield, but in administrative talents and a commitment to scholarship, to the dispensation of his accumulated political and moral wisdom, and thus, ultimately, to the exercise of just and wise kingship.[40]

A prodigious genealogy was flexible in another respect, for such connections could be invented, not least by the Mughals' rivals who had no actual claims to such descent.[41] Timur had defeated and taken captive the Ottoman sultan, Bayezid I (r. 1389–1402), triggering the Ottoman interregnum that lasted over a decade until 1413. The Ottomans were amply aware not only of their lacking Timurid-Chinggisid lineage, but also of the potency of the charisma deriving from Turko-Mongolic ancestry, in general, and Timurid descent, in particular. Times of precarity, whether in the aftermath of the interregnum or following the late sixteenth-century reversals against the Ottoman Empire's European neighbours and the Safavids, prompted writers of Turkish-language works to link the Ottoman dynasty to Oghuz Khan, the Turkic ancestor of several 'Turko-Mongolic' dynasties, including the Seljuqs, for the legitimacy deriving therefrom.[42] The conquests of the sixteenth century brought the Ottomans glory and prestige, providing opportunity for writers to make bolder moves on behalf of their patrons.[43]

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[35] Lefèvre, 'Recovering', 486.

[36] Ibid, 466–67.

[37] Ibid, 468–89.

[38] Ibid, 468–69.

[39] Ibid, 475–81.

[40] Such a picture is at odds with how others portrayed him; namely, as a drunkard and addict who had relinquished political control to his wife, Nur Jahan, and her immediate male relatives in return for a life of sensuous pleasure. For discussion of such historiography: ibid, 453–58.

[41] For a comparative analysis of Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal literature of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries broaching genealogy and those other genres, modes, or concepts from which dynasts derived their legitimacy, see: Quinn, *Persian Historiography*.

A similar pattern is discernible in the Safavid realm. Though not possessing Timurid descent, the Safavids from Shah Ismail I's reign by necessity operated within the milieu Timur bequeathed subsequent Eurasian rulers, comprising the ideas of the *sahib qiran* and saviour.[44] The Safavids also made use of their Aq Qoyunlu heritage, claiming Alid descent and the messianic myth of its association, and linked themselves to the succession of mythical and historical great kings of the *Shahnama* ('Book of Kings'), the Persian epic poem penned by Ferdowsi (d. 1020).[45] Under the pen name Khatai (The Sinner), Ismail described himself as the reincarnation of such kings as Faridun, Khusraw, Jamshid, and Zohak, as well as Alexander the Great; as Jesus, one of the great Shi'i martyrs, and as the Hidden Imam; as a master and a guide, but also as a sinner and a slave.[46] Thus, Ismail I drew Timur's broader legacy together with his own role as head of the Safavi Sufi order, kingly power as described in Persian oral and literary tradition with the religious authority deriving from ideas central to Twelver Shi'ism.[47]

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[42] Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, 33–34. See, also: Menchinger, 'Dreams', 4–7.

[43] Some, including the refugee Persian writer of the *Hasht Bihisht* ('Eight Paradises') (1506), Idris Bitlisi, subtly remodelled what was entailed by the Ottoman dynasty's Turkic connections, emphasising how their ancestors had in fact reformed eruptions of uncontrolled violence into good government, while also taking pains to link the Ottoman Empire to the larger imperial legacy connected to Istanbul/Constantinople; for 'Turkestan [however conceived] stood for violent masculinity, predatory culture, pastoral economy, and dangerous intrusion', against which '"Rum," [Asia Minor, roughly coterminous with the former Byzantine Empire,] […] stood for agrarian prosperity, gentle governance, mildness, and controlled military activity.' – Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, citation 32, and 28–50 for analysis.

[44] As did the Ottomans, see: Flemming, *Essays*, 203–38.

[45] The Aq Qoyunlu or White Sheep Turkmans ruled over western Asia from 1378 until they were usurped by Shah Ismail I in 1501. They were granted lands in Anatolia by Timur from which they had expanded by the mid-fifteenth century toward the Iranian Plateau. The maternal grandmother of Ismail I was an Aq Qoyunlu queen, and the former had taken refuge at the Aq Qoyunlu court. See: Dale, *Muslim*, 70; Moin, *Millennial*, 75.

[46] Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 14, for his verses.

[47] See, also: Moin, *Millennial*, 87–88, 92.

In the face of numerous challenges, however, there was a drift away from the constitution of Safavid kingship around Sufi leadership and Shiʿi concepts, with a corresponding move closer toward Timurid forms of legitimacy from Shah Abbas I's reign in the later sixteenth century.[48] More audaciously, court historians began to write about supposed (invented?) meetings between the world conqueror and Abbas I's ancestors to convey the notion that Timur had foreseen the growth of the Sufi order headed by the Safavid family in Ardabil into an imperium with power reaching across central Eurasia. More audaciously still, documentation of a *waqf* endowed upon forebears of the Safavid dynasty by Timur was forged in the Safavid atelier.[49] Submission of a copy to the Mughal court via a letter to Prince Salim (later, Jahangir) at once strived to draw a connection between the two dynasties while contesting Mughal sovereignty by undermining what made it *sui generis*. The early shahs had drawn on Timurid court culture as they transformed their *tariqa* into an imperium; attempting to make this explicit connection to Timurid ancestry itself was entirely novel, however.[50]

Such artifice does not detract from the truth of Mughal genealogy or undermine the charisma associated with Timurid-Chinggisid descent. On the contrary, the efforts made by the Ottoman and Safavid courts at the height of their respective powers to establish links with Timurid kingship and its forms of legitimacy, or else lay claim to some comparably brilliant ancestry, suggests how vital these claims were in the competition with imperial rivals.[51] Other rulers actively recognised the centrality of Timurid ancestry to Mughal authority, referencing Timur as a gambit – 'flattery' – in diplomatic missions. Shah Abbas, for example, sought to ease tension over control of the borderland by dispatching to the Mughal court a ruby originating from the treasury of Timur's grandson, Ulugh Beg, that was inscribed with his, his father's, and his grandfather's names. Jahangir accepted the gift as an auspicious blessing, then inscribing his own genealogy upon the gem, before presenting it to his son, Khurram (later, the emperor Shah Jahan).[52] There was an even wider awareness of the centrality of Timurid ancestry to Mughal authority, furthermore, for the Portuguese offered Jahangir a portrait of Timur claimed to have been painted during the Ottoman interregnum by a Byzantine artist (a claim Jahangir doubted, incidentally).[53] And, finally, the sultans of Aceh were so impressed by the presentation of Mughal genealogy, that they imitated Mughal seals proclaiming Timurid descent.[54]

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[48] Quinn, 'Timurid Legitimacy'. See, further: Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 44–91.

[49] Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 86–89.

[50] Moin, *Millennial*, 4.

[51] Şahin, *Empire*, 62; Chann, 'Auspicious Conjunction', here 99–104; Flemming, *Essays*, 226–38.

[52] Balabanlilar, 'Lords', 9.

[53] Ibid, 9.

[54] Lefèvre, 'Fathers', 416.

Such genealogies, it bears emphasising, were not a production unique to the Islamic world. Genealogy, an interest in history, and referencing the Classical past was common among Renaissance princes engaging with the fruits of recently rediscovered knowledge (§11.1). Grand ideas about the monarch as Diana or Hercules or other mythical and legendary figures, for instance, valuably succoured royal legitimacy at times of instability.[55] The Tudors remained as concerned with the perception of their dynastic legitimacy in Elizabeth I's reign as they had been in 1485, when her grandfather violently seized the throne.[56] A scroll from 1559 preserved at Hatfield House, built by one of the queen's most powerful former ministers, Robert Cecil (1563–1612), tellingly takes pains in documenting Elizabeth's descent from Adam and Eve; other purported relatives include mythic figures, such as Romulus and Remus, or King Arthur and King Lear (Leir) from British lore.[57] Returning to the Mughals' imperial core in north India, it bears remembering that there, too, a *local* audience and *domestic* context was equally important to the production and popular reception of the dynasty's prodigious genealogy.

Indeed, so far we have only considered Timurid ideas and descent within the broader Indo-Islamicate or erstwhile Turko-Mongolic worlds, where they held great currency, yet the purchase of the Timurid inheritance among Indians needs to be (carefully) delineated, too. Among those Indian rulers and bureaucrats absorbed into the Mughal state, the reiteration of Mughal genealogy possessed a potent – if not terrifying – awesomeness. Timur's invasions had been censured to varying degrees with various motivations by Indo-Persian writers down the ages as a time of carnage, pillage, and enslavement. This rendered the facts of Babur's ancestry somewhat awkward.[58] At the same time, Babur was not the only Timurid prince on the subcontinent; he had numerous rivals. Men such as Muhammad Zaman Mirza, 'a descendant of the last great Timurid prince, Sultan Husayn Bayqara', did not see themselves of inferior lineage to the Mughals, and thus felt bold enough to rebel against their authority. Meanwhile, others still were busy building Timurid successor states of their own, not least Babur's cousin Mirza Haydar Dughlat, who founded a state in Kashmir, or his relatives ruling over Sindh and southern Afghanistan in the name of the Arghun dynasty.[59]

If the Timurid legacy was hardly a wellspring of Mughal political legitimacy in the empire's early years, this certainly changed over time, particularly from Humayun's reign.[60] That said, its valence varied among different constituencies On the one hand, were those central Asians and Persians who had departed from their homelands either with Babur or with Humayun after the latter's sojourn in Safavid Iran. There was also a steady stream of central and west Asian migrants in search of the riches and opportunities brought by the *Pax Mughalica* through the long seventeenth century, such groups being especially susceptive to the charisma deriving from Timurid ancestry.[61] On the other hand, the steady expansion of the Mughal state enlarged and transformed the imperial elite, with the incorporation of local powerholders from newly conquered territories adding greater diversity to the corps of *mansabdars* by Shah Jahan's reign.[62] Mughal kingship could not, therefore, rest upon such foundations as genealogy and descent alone, the latter's significance ebbing over time and perceived differently among separate constituencies. Moreover, the expression of royal power within the Indian or Indo-Islamicate political ecumene by necessity required the normative and symbolic moorings derived from the (evolving) Indic context as well as the wider world of Islam.

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[55] See, for instance: Wooding, *Tudor England*, 312–15, 524.

[56] Ibid, 2–4, 66–72.

[57] See, also: Yates, *Astraea*, 50

[58] Habib, 'Timur'.

[59] Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, 140, and citation 156.

[60] Ibid, 140–66, especially 156 onward for analysis of the greater role of Timurid genealogy from Humayun's reign.

8.2 *Zill-i Allah* (The Shadow of God): Perso-Islamicate and Indic Royal Traditions

On his victory tour of Delhi in 1526, Babur not only forged a connection with Timur by walking in his footsteps; he also visited the tombs of saints, including Nizam al-din Awliya. Babur recognised Delhi's place as one of India's most important religious centres – not merely as its premier city and centre of politics – as well as the power deriving from pious acts, the patronage of religious institutions, and association with important saints and spiritual lineages.[63] Babur's careful cultivation of the wellsprings of spiritual legitimacy was of longer standing and already of some complexity before 1526, however, as we have seen (§2.2.2). In a 'particularly Indic act of expiation', ahead of a showdown with the army of the fearsome Rajput warrior Rana Sangha in 1527, for instance, Babur ordered the digging of a step well beside which a charitable building was to be constructed, arguably measures to conciliate his Indian collaborators.[64] That said, the well was to be dug where vessels containing wine brought from Kabul for royal consumption had been poured onto the ground, so that the act at once also signified Babur's adherence to Islamic prescripts. This decision was complemented by the announcement of other measures made to keep his Turani (Uzbek) and other Muslim collaborators on side. Babur was acting on the instruction of an astrologer whose advice bore little fruit and who was summarily paid off, but the whole episode demonstrates the efforts – at the very beginning of Mughal rule in north India – to forge Mughal authority in dialogue with both Indic traditions and Islamic piety.[65]

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[61] Subrahmanyam, 'Iranians'.

[62] Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 145–47.

[63] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 119.

[64] Moin, *Millennial*, 67, for citation.

The *Dar al-Islam* was constituted of Muslims adhering to diverse customs and of numerous sects – even if the majority were Sunni – not to mention the multiplicity of Sufi *tariqas*. This fact had numerous implications for the Mughals and the ways they placated 'the faithful' (i.e., fellow Muslims). At the same time, India was a place of tremendous diversity, with religious, cultural, and political traditions varying from region to region, wherein were also sedimented multiple layers of Perso-Islamicate influence – several centuries deep in some places but thinner in others – and wherein could be found Muslim societies and the sway of Sufi orders grown on local soil. Already in Babur's time, therefore, a coteries of influences were by necessity moulded into the construction and (re)presentation of kingly authority, not least those of Indian origin or 'Indic' by their development over time, some codified in text but many others existing as embodied and affective forms of knowledge. By the reign of Babur's great-great-grandson, Mughal kingship had become so embedded within the Indian ecumene as to be emplaced in a comprehensive 'institutional genealogy of Indian kingship' – the *Tarikh-i Rajaha-yi Dilli* ('History of the Kings of Delhi') – written in Persian by the Hindu litterateur and imperial *munshi*, Chandar Bhan Brahman, a text that was itself a product of the continued swirling together of cultural influences.[66] Thus, we might ask, what Indic and Islamicate concepts went into the fabrication of Mughal kingship and kingly presentation?

By the sixteenth century, India was home to numerous Sufi holy men and its own distinctive Sufi orders or lineages, whose succour and the spiritual-political legitimacy deriving therefrom was perhaps more appropriate and more useful to the growing Mughal imperium. Much to the consternation of their Turani nobles – who remained more closely associated with the Ahrari Naqshbandiya – Humayun lavished his patronage upon an Indian Sufi lineage, the Shattari Sufi order of Gwalior in northern India, although this change owed much to his father's prior recalculation of the most suitable spiritual alliance for the dynasty.[67] From Humayun's perspective, the Shattariya not only had a large following in north India, larger than the Naqshbandiya at the time; the Shattari brothers were 'immensely popular local saints but also experts in the Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit learned traditions', whose appeal stemmed from their embeddedness within 'elite intellectual traditions and popular local knowledges', within 'Islamic and Indic idioms.'[68] The focus of Mughal patronage shifted again during Akbar's reign, this time to the Chishti order, which had first become a powerful Sufi order through its mutually reinforcing relationship with the rulers of the Delhi Sultanates. Akbar's first architectural

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[65] Ibid, 67–68.

[66] Kinra, *Writing*, 95–99.

[67] Moin, *Millennial*, 68, 74, 79, 98–100.

[68] Ibid, 105, for citation. Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 384–400, for primary source materials.

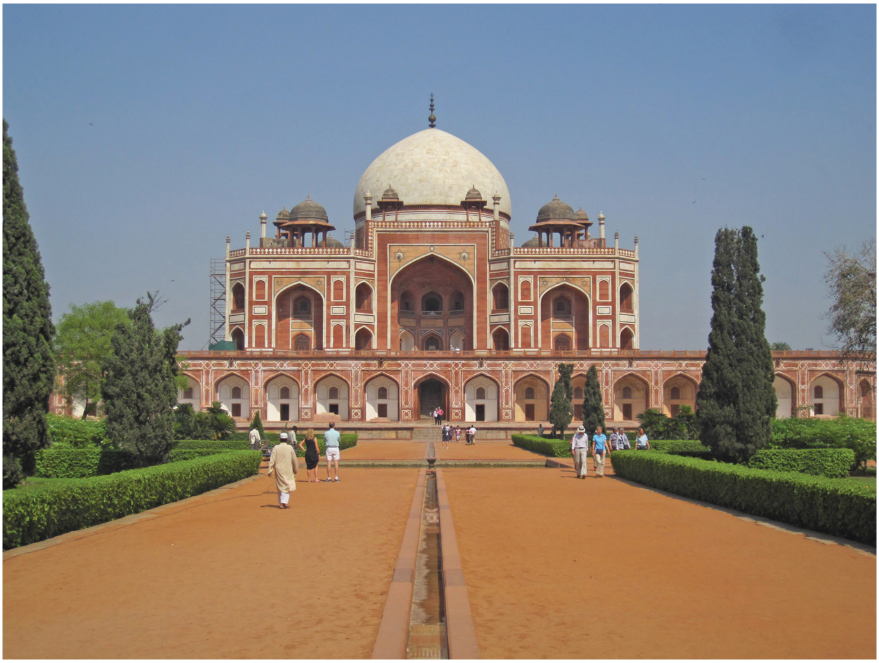

Fig. 8E Humayun's Tomb and Gardens

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

commission was the tomb for his father (Fig. 8E), built in a Timurid style with Islamicate referents but faced in typically Indian materials (red sandstone) – and, more significantly, located only a stone's throw away from Nizam al-din Awliya's tomb.[69] Akbar's greatest project, however, was the construction of a new city and palace – Fatehpur Sikri – built in a less Timurid and more Indic style, and standing as testament to his reverence for Shaikh Salim Chishti (1478–1572).

Following on the heels of such venerable predecessors as the Tughluq and Malwa sultans, Akbar made his first pilgrimage to the tomb of Muinuddin Chishti in Ajmer in 1562.[70] The event is recorded in the *Akbarnama* ('The Book of Akbar') – a work commissioned by Akbar in 1589 as a record of his reign, penned as an encomium by Abu al-Fazl, with lavish paintings of the most important scenes made by artists in the imperial atelier in the 1590s. Salim Chishti predicted that Akbar's wife would issue an heir, the emperor vowing to make the pilgrimage from Agra to Ajmer on foot if the prophecy were to come true. Salim Chishti's prognostication was correct: Prince Salim – named in honour of the Sufi – was born in 1569, with a second son born to another wife in 1570. Akbar thus set off from Agra in 1570, this episode also visually depicted in *Akbarnama*, and repeated the pilgrimage annually until 1579, although walking on these occasions only on the itinerary's last leg.[71] Ostensibly built to celebrate the conquest of Gujarat, the construction of Fatehpur Sikri 'more immediately underscored Akbar's links with the Chishti order', Asher and Talbot note.[72] Akbar commenced the project in 1571, the site of the new complex – some thirty-eight kilometres from Agra – chosen because it was the humble abode of Salim Chishti, with the layout thus incorporating a *khanaqah* centrally within the palace complex and entered through the enormous arches of the fifty-four metre high Buland Darwaza.[73]

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[69] Asher, *Architecture*, 41–47.

[70] Currie, *Shrine and Cult*, 97–102.

Upon Salim Chishti's death in 1572, Akbar ordered a white marble tomb be built in the courtyard of the *khanaqah*. The significance of this and other tombs – imperial and non-imperial – is worth stating, for these were not sombre places for housing the dead, but full of life and used performatively. Their construction obliged the patron to provide additional support for employing readers of the Quran and for celebration of the annual *urs* – the commemoration of the departed, a custom long associated with saints but by the seventeenth century also accorded to the Mughals. The celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth at the Taj Mahal sometime around the mid-seventeenth century, for instance, cost some six thousand rupees, expended not only on reciters of the Quran and the services of more heterodox mystical figures, but also on trays of snacks and entrées, perfume, betel leaf, and the other requisites for making gay such a festivity. Any unspent funds were disbursed among the assembly of learned specialists as well as the poor and needy.[74] All these costs – for salaries, for upkeep, for festivities – necessitated the endowment of a charitable trust (*waqf*) to the recipient, the trust's income generated from revenue-yielding territories that would otherwise have gone to the imperial treasury, thus underscoring the gravity of these decisions.[75] At the tombs and palaces of the Mughals themselves, these festivities afforded opportunities for the everyday performance of Mughal kingship: they were, Rajeev Kinra reminds us, 'occasions for interaction with the local population – whether purely as entertaining spectacle or as opportunities for people to avail themselves of Mughal officials' generosity.'[76]

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[71] 'Akbar's Pilgrimage to Ajmer' (watercolour and gold; Basawan and Nand Gwaliari; c. 1590–95) from the *Akbarnama*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS.2:77–1896, which can be viewed online.

[72] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 160.

[73] Ibid, 160–62. See, also: Asher, *Architecture*, 47–67.

[74] Kinra, *Writing*, 57–58.

[75] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 242–43. McChesney's ground-breaking portrait of Mazar-i Sharif in Balkh – from its foundation and initial endowment in later Timurid times, through to the modern era – remains an important and lively study of the 'life and times' of one of the most important shrines in Eurasia, as well as its changing governance, the legal-cum-commercial institutions supporting it, and the window onto the changing world around that it provides: McChesney, *Waqf*.

Ironically, construction of Shaikh Salim Chishti's tomb at Fatehpur Sikri was completed in 1580–81, around the time Akbar began to distance himself from saintly figures (§3.3.2–§3.3.4). To make sense of what underlay this decision, we must move into the rarefied space of the imperial court. Abu al-Fazl's service at court began in 1575 and soon after he began to cast Akbar as a supernatural and light-filled being, as the *insan-i kamil* (perfect man), and thus as a moral exemplar for his courtiers and subjects. He drew upon the illuminationist (*ishraqi*) philosophy of the twelfth-century Persian esoteric thinker, Shabab al-Din Suhrawardi (d. 1191). His ideas about the emperor's luminescence found their way into such texts as the *Akbarnama*, in which the metaphors of light and dark abound, and which portray Akbar's powers as a seer endowed with the grace of God and his absolute command over the human and animal realms. They are also evident in the visual record of Akbar's reign: Mughal artists placed him centrally in the action of a scene, depicted him proportionally larger than other figures, portrayed him as tranquil, even when others around him are enraged, and used colour to convey his radiance.[77] The emperor could be uncontrollably angry, of course, which only underscores the fabrication at work in the illustrations accompanying the *Akbarnama*.[78] Akbar was the Sun King long before Louis XIV.

Another set of influences underpinning Abu al-Fazl's ideas about the emperor's divine light stemmed from Hindu and Jain concepts of *darshan* or auspicious sight (not least of sacred idols during worship), and of solar worship, additionally from Zoroastrian fire veneration, which came to shape the daily routine of the court.[79] 'Worship of the sun and moon with its images of light was easily compatible,' John Richards noted, 'with the myths of origin and descent central to the ethos of his Rajput nobles.'[80] Akbar was known to worship the sun by a set of rituals he invented, facing east four times daily and prostrating himself in front of a sacred fire, at this time also abstaining from excessive meat consumption, drinking alcohol, and sexual intercourse.[81] Ideas about *darshan* lent importance to the *jharokha* or viewing-window as a feature of imperial architecture, with Mughal palaces incorporating a *jharokha-i darshan* at which the patriarch of the Mughal household appeared before assembled subjects of the Mughal kingdom. At Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar presented himself at sunrise at such a window constructed in the southwestern end of the palace complex. At the Agra Fort, which Shah Jahan extensively remodelled, a *jharokha-i darshan* was constructed for the emperor's daily appearance before his petitioners and worshippers in the early morning.[82] According to court historians, the timing did not merely coincide with sunrise; it was like the rising sun itself.[83] Artists turned the spectacle into a topos of imperial portraiture, thereby re-presenting the emperor's sacred being for veneration by the viewer of such pictures.[84]

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[76] Kinra, *Writing*, 58.

[77] Asher, 'Sun', 161–75, for what has been described here.

[78] Talbot, 'Anger and Atonement'.

[79] For an account of Akbar's honouring the sun several times a day, penned by a Jain Sanskrit specialist at the Mughal court: Truschke, *Culture*, 41–42. For insight into how these influences came to have an effect on Mughal kingship: Truschke, 'Solar Cosmologies'.

[80] Richards, *Mughal*, 47.

[81] Ibid, 47.

Although he orchestrated Abu al-Fazl's death in 1602 to eliminate a voice opposing his succession to the Mughal throne, Prince Salim nevertheless continued to use Abu al-Fazl's imagery of light and illumination and to conceive of himself as a light-filled being. Crowned the emperor Jahangir in 1605, he also revived the connection with the Chishtiya, making pilgrimage to the shrine in Ajmer five times and even relocating the imperial capital to that city from 1615 to 1618.[85] A stunning double-facing portrait of Jahangir and Muinuddin Chishti threads a link between the two men: conscious not to show the emperor in submission to the latter, the viewer instead sees the saint presenting the Mughal king with a Timurid crown and the key to the conquest of the temporal world in the left-hand picture, and Jahangir unlocking a globe held in his palm with this key in the right-hand picture.[86] Among the devices borrowed from European art, is the halo or nimbus, seen in this and many other portraits of Jahangir and every picture of Shah Jahan (see, e.g., Fig. 8F), often painted in gold to literally reflect the emperor's sanctity and radiance.[87] Jahangir's fine clothes, jewels, and the dagger tucked in his sash signal his unique position as a temporal king *and* spiritual leader.[88] Mughal kingship did not *depend* upon a greater and more supernatural power of holy men, the double portrait of Muinuddin Chishti and Jahangir seems to say; if Mughal kings were guided by such men, it was only because saints and theologians entrusted them with the princely duty that rightfully fell from the heavens onto their shoulders.

Scholarly attention once fixed on the *emperor's* patronage of the arts and architecture, but Catherine B. Asher's work on Raja Man Singh's patronage at Vrindavan and Rohtas (§9.3.1) shows how an imperial serviceman 'simultaneously served his own interests and those of the emperor'.[89] The raja's new palace complex at Rohtas proclaimed Mughal authority, but inscriptions in Persian and Sanskrit indicate that Man Singh was navigating between his role as the emperor's servant (declared in the Persian text) and his personal authority as a Kachhwaha raja, protector of his people, and patron of the arts in his own right (in the Sanskrit).[90] Royal authority was neither entirely the outward projection of a construct produced by the Mughal centre, nor was it based solely on the fealty and deference of the nobility toward the emperor, therefore. Rather, it inhered within the very bond between the emperor and his elite; the familial bond of a father to his extended household, as Stephen Blake characterises it (§7.2).[91] That bond was reaffirmed through ritual prestation: a serviceman's offer of *nazr* (tribute or gifts) and his receipt of *khilat* and other gifts of equal or greater worth from the emperor. These gifts might include expensively caparisoned horses (Fig. 8F) or elephants: recorded in the *Padshahnama*, for instance, is the gift of an Iraqi horse from the *jagirdar* of Ellichpur that became the Padshah Pasand (Choice of the Emperor).[92]

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[82] Asher, 'Sun', 176–78. Chandar Bhan Brahman – whose degree of access to the emperor was virtually unrivalled among litterateurs – offered in his *Chahar Chaman* a fascinating and detailed description of a 'day in the life' of Shah Jahan, a rich discussion of which (accompanied by many excerpts from the text) can be found in: Kinra, *Writing*, 102–27.

[83] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 241.

[84] Koch, 'Mughal Padshahs', 208.

[85] Currie, *Shrine and Cult*, 106–10, which notes the largesse made by Shah Jahan and other members of the imperial family to support the construction of new structures in and around the shrine.

[86] Moin, *Millennial*, 189–93.

[87] Asher, 'Sun', 182.

[88] See, Lally, 'Fashion', especially 606–16.

[89] Asher, 'Architecture', 183.

Representation was also made by foreign courts or institutions (e.g., the Ottoman or Elizabethan courts as well as other courts from within India, the Jesuit mission and the European trading organisations). A double-page spread in the *Akbarnama*, for example, records the embassy of Sayyid Beg, sent by the Safavid shah in 1652. The left-hand picture depicts the meeting of the two men, while the right-hand picture shows the preparation of an ostentatious array of gifts. At the Bourbon court in 1715, by way of comparison, Louis XIV received Mohammad Reza Beg, the Safavid envoy, who was subsequently depicted in an engraving at the head of a procession carrying gifts of priceless stones and bullion to the Sun King.[93] What does this tell us? In the first place, foreign delegates' participation in *nazr-khilat* rituals helped project Mughal kingship into the global domain. This shaped and/or was shaped by broadly similar practices of gift exchange across the globe. Take, for example, the exchange of fully-caparisoned horses gifted between the Ottoman and Mantua courts that also doubled as a means of improving bloodstock, thus supporting the latter's involvement in horse breeding and trading. This shares much in common with the submission of horses by the Ottomans and Safavids to the Mughals.[94] For too long assumed to be of European invention, the culture of the (occidental) diplomatic gift may well have been shaped by encounters with the tastes and preferences, rituals and customs of Afro-Asian courts, therefore.[95] The greater

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[90] Ibid, 191.

[91] Blake, 'Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire'.

[92] Thackston, ed., *Jahangirnama*, 197; Begley and Desai, eds., *Shah Jahan Nama*, 370.

[93] Biedermann *et al*, 'Introduction', 2–6, for these examples and associated observations, as well as reproductions of these pictures.

[94] Cevizli, 'Portraits', especially 38–42. 'Connoisseurship' of horses – by Indian kings, not least – was inextricably linked to science, trade, and the production of violence on the Indian subcontinent, too; see: Lally, 'Equines'.

[95] Biedermann *et al*, 'Introduction', pp. 10–11 and *passim*.

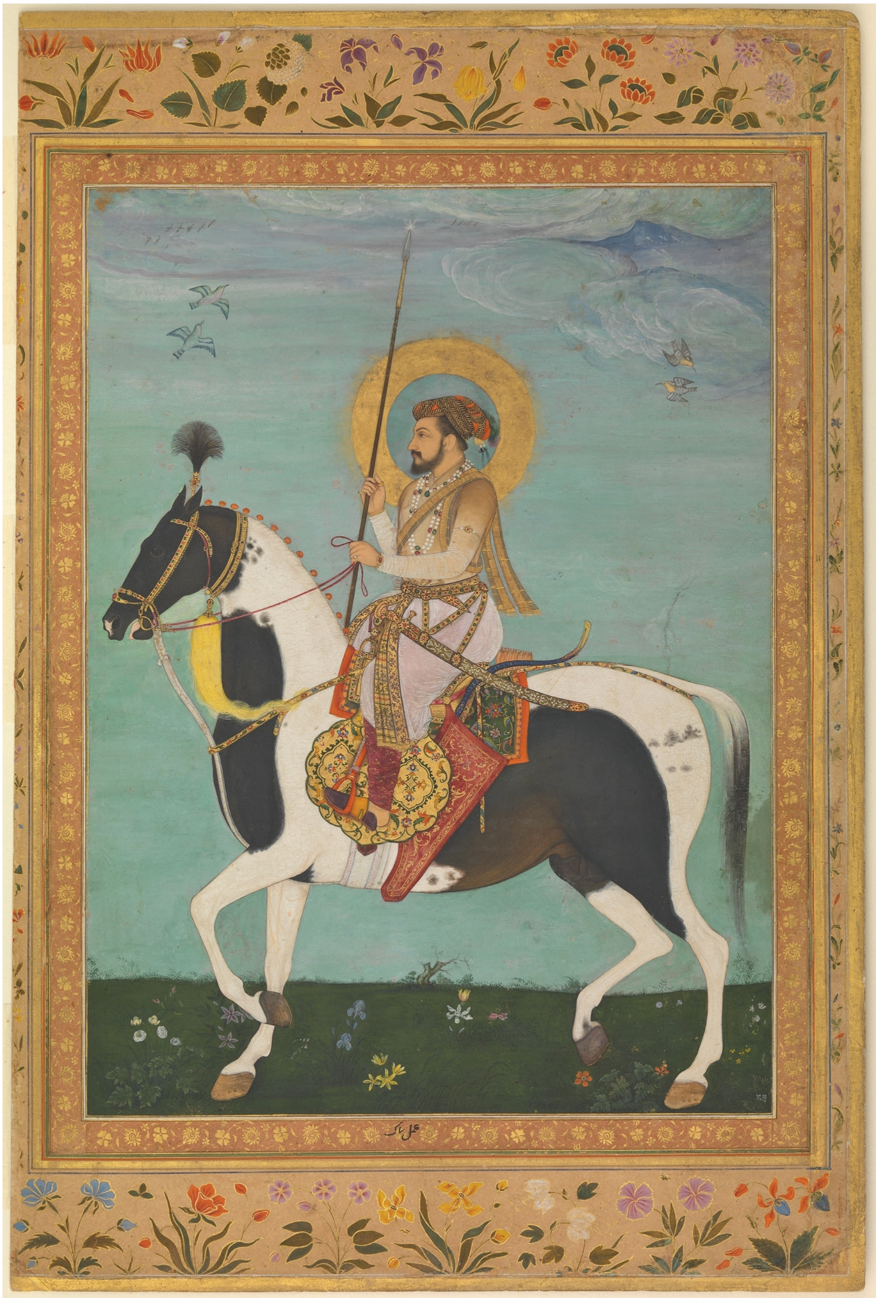

Fig. 8F Equestrian Portrait of Shah Jahan (watercolour and gold; by the Mughal artist Payag, c. 1630)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 55.121.10.21

connectedness of royal courts, near and far, spurred mimesis and rivalry – the 'competitive kingship' of early-modern monarchs – to paraphrase a recent contribution by Jeremy Adelman.[96]

It was not only foreign delegates' presentation at the Mughal court, but also through their re-presentation in paintings that Mughal universalism and kingly identity was fabricated for the present and posterity.[97] Other pictures in masterworks such as the *Padshahnama* include the emperor being weighed on a scale in 1632 on his forty-second lunar birthday, the event coinciding with the presentation of *khilat* to the Persian ambassador.[98] The Mughal ruler and princes were weighed on either or both of their two birthdays – according to the (Muslim) lunar and (Hindu) solar calendars – with the corresponding mass in coin or treasure disbursed among the public. Such generosity was part of an established discourse of imperialism, with sobriquets like *zar-afshan* (he who strews gold) and the notion of the king who 'rains down treasures' (*ganj-bar*) current in Delhi Sultanate times.[99] These were accompanied by much celebration, making them as lively as the festivities for Eid, Nowruz (Persian New Year), Holi, and Dussehra.[100]

Some of the innovations in kingly presentation fabricated during his predecessors' reigns seem not to figure in Shah Jahan's own self-fashioning. Shah Jahan's court nevertheless became more – not less – cosmopolitan, grandiose, ritualised, and hierarchical.[101] In the *diwan-i amm* (hall of public audience) at the Agra Fort, a space intended to evoke the audience hall at Persepolis, the emperor sat on a large marble throne. It was surrounded by inlaid panels of Italian craftsmanship featuring flora, fauna, and the figure of Orpheus taming wild animals from Classical lore, the latter a metaphor for justice, itself the prerequisite for harmony. Overall, the throne and its setting recalled the Islamic understanding of the throne of the Jewish king, Solomon – the seat of the ideal and just ruler, an image threaded through Shah Jahan's portraits and thus his self-presentation, much as also found in that of the Henry VIII or the Ottoman sultan, Suleyman.[102]

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[96] Adelman, 'Mimesis'.

[97] For their part, European recipients of *khilat* also re-presented their receipt of such honour in pictures of themselves in their robes, surrounded by their gifts. For discussion, drawing on the pictures of receipt of Ottoman *khilat*: Karl, 'Objects', 127–28.

[98] 'The Weighing of Shah-Jahan on his 42nd Lunar Birthday' (watercolour and metallic paints; painted by Bhola, c. 1640) from the *Padshahnama*, fol. 71r, Royal Collections Trust, Windsor Castle, RCIN 10005025.n, which can be viewed online.

[99] Anooshahr, 'Imperial Discourse', 165.

[100] On the relationship of goddess worship to kingship in Bengal, and the patronage of the annual Durga *puja* and of new temples by the Mughals, their representatives, and sub-imperial elites, as well as the impact of this upon the popularity and changing character of local devotion, in turn, see: Chatterjee, 'Goddess Encounters', especially 1445–49, 1463–86.

[101] Kinra, *Writing*, 102–27. The importance of hierarchy in Shah Jahani painting is examined in Beach and Koch, eds., *King of the World*.

[102] Koch, 'Solomon', on the purchase and place of Orpheus/Solomon in the connected Mughal and European contexts; Kołodziejczyk, 'Khan', 190, describes the Solomonic concept in

In fact, Solomonic motifs and symbolism naturally had even wider purchase, and it was a contemporary of Suleyman and even closer contemporary of Akbar – the Spanish Habsburg king and emperor, Philip II (r. 1556–98) – who was celebrated by his flatterers as the new Solomon. It was Philip's new monastery and royal palace on the outskirts of Madrid, the Escorial, that was reputedly designed as 'the new temple of Solomon' and completed in 1584 with frescos and statues that made the link amply clear.[103]

8.3 *Murshid-i Kamil* (The Perfect Guide): The Saint, The Messiah, and the King

The notion of the king and his court as the *axis mundi* or pole (*qutb*) around which all else moved was not unique to Timurid Eurasia, for the Qianlong emperor also constructed his moral authority over all cultures by drawing on the Indic concept of the *chakravartin* (wheel-turning king), and becoming the Pole Star – the central locus around which all else moves 'and by its own immobility gives meaning to all movement'.[104] Nor did it reflect a monarchy confined to the palace. Like other Eurasian dynasts, Babur and Humayun spent considerable time on the move, consolidating the empire by creating alliances – and their kingly identities – through hunting and feasting on the kill, whether in the travelling camp or in those *chahar-baghs* laid out and planted around their palaces.[105] Hunting expeditions were especially laden with opportunities: moving into choice countryside where good game was to be found and martial skill could be finessed, or a chance for the emperor to commune with wandering hermits and ascetics (see: Fig. 2A), visit the habitations of highly-esteemed holy men, and get the measure of his nobles while supervising the goings-on in his realm so that he might finetune, say, agrarian policy.[106] More broadly, the emperor's peripateticism was integral to the maintenance of loyalty between the emperor and his nobles as well as the centre's swift suppression of uprisings by pretenders or grass-roots rebellions by peasants (§7.2.1). Much like Ottoman processions, the royal progresses of the Tudor monarchs, or the Field of Cloth of Gold pitched in 1520 by Henry VIII of England and Francis I of France (r. 151–47), furthermore, the

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the presentation of Suleyman as a ruler of Muslims, Jews, and Christians; Wooding, *Tudor England*, 181–82, 186, on Henry VIII as Solomon.

[103] Rady, *Habsburgs*, 85–86. Solomon's Temple remained an important architectural aspiration for builders of Christian architecture (churches, monasteries, etc).

[104] Crossley, *Manchus*, 116. See, also: Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 154.

[105] Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 69.

[106] O'Hanlon, 'Kingdom', 902; Allsen, *Royal Hunt*, especially 119–40, 186–232. The seventeenth-century state secretary and poet, Chandar Bhan Brahman, made the link between the emperor's peripateticism and his eye on policy: Kinra, *Writing*, 126. See, also: Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity*, 84–89, who views the hunt as a re-enactment and memorialisation of the Mughals' semi-nomadic, Turko-Persianate heritage.

Mughal emperor's moving court and camp was itself a *grande spectacle*, a performance of the king's majesty.[107]

Of all Muslim pilgrimages, the Hajj is unrivalled in importance. What the Ottoman sultan lacked in Timurid ancestry, he compensated for – following the conquest of the Hejaz in 1517 – by deriving spiritual authority as caliph and servant or protector of the Holy Cities (*khadim al-haremeyn*).[108] While the Great Mosque in Mecca was being restored, for example, Murad IV (r. 1623–40) routinely distributed *khilat* in ceremonies that helped connect the renovations to the imperial centre.[109] Being geographically distant from Istanbul, the Ottoman sultans never performed the Hajj to Mecca. But they did patronise two official annual pilgrimage caravans – from Cairo and from Damascus – to convey the sultan's role as supreme leader of the Muslim world as widely as possible.[110] Unable to seize control of the Hejaz, the Mughals could nevertheless patronise the annual Hajj pilgrimage from India and could make gifts of their largesse to the *sharif* of Mecca (the descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and steward of the Holy Cities), in this way weakening one of the central pillars of Ottoman universalism.[111] That said, Mughal pilgrim ships – which could carry hundreds of souls at a time – fell into abeyance from Akbar's reign until that of Shah Jahan due to such factors as the insecurity of the sea routes and the hostility directed toward Indian pilgrims by the Ottoman authorities.[112]

Other holy places and pilgrimages also had great significance, perhaps even more so when Muslims were unable to travel easily from India to Arabia. Here lies an additional significance of Akbar and Jahangir's pilgrimages to the Chishti shrine at Ajmer and the largesse made by members of the imperial family, who could not realistically support the Hajj pilgrimage because of the danger to pilgrims.[113] Here, too, we find a striking similarity with their contemporary, Shah Abbas I, who made thirteen pilgrimages to the family shrine in Ardabil to affirm his connection to the Sufi *tariqa* of his ancestor, Shaikh Safi al-Din, and commenced the same number to the shrine of the eighth Shi'i imam in Mashhad. The aim of maintaining 'a close and public association' with the departed Shi'i imams was to demonstrate 'their backing for Safavid rule'; hence, Abbas I went so far as to travel to Mashad on foot in 1601.[114] Abbas' devotions were not unprecedented, only more frequent than either his predecessors' or ancestors' pilgrimages. Again, it was Safavid-Ottoman rivalry and the closure of the Hejaz to Iranian pilgrims that made the state's patronage of nearby holy places much more important as *alternates* to its sponsorship of the Hajj caravans.[115]

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[107] Kinra, *Writing*, 130, for a description of such a parade; Kaicker, *The King*, 54–56, for a discussion of a procession made by Farrukhsiyar in 1718/19; Wooding, *Tudor England*, 48, 455–57.

[108] Casale, *Ottoman*, 7, 13. 82.

[109] Faroqhi, *Pilgrims*, 118.

[110] Ibid, 32–73, for continuity and change under the Ottomans in the caravan traffic.

[111] Findly, 'Capture', 236.

[112] Farooqi, 'Moguls'.

[113] Currie, *Shrine and Cult*, 97–110.

[114] Melville, 'Pilgrimage', 196–97 for the enumeration of the pilgrimages, and 193 for citation.

The Safavid-Mughal concurrence is also critically important, A. Azfar Moin reveals, to understanding the relationship of sainthood to sacred kingship in Mughal India. To make sense of the mystical aspects of Mughal kingship, a certain amount of context is useful. Oneiric powers were one of the building blocks of this kind of mystical or saintly leadership. The Bible is full of dreams, for instance, and although some Protestant reformers derided oneiric powers as Catholic superstition, dreams played their part in Reformation theology, nevertheless. The early moderns continued to attach tremendous power and significance to dreams, portents, and prognostications. These ranged from the visions of God experienced by the Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), before setting out to proselytise in China, to the prophetic dreams of a solicitor's daughter named Lucretia de Leon that 'foresaw' Spain's defeat under Philip II's feeble leadership, which she shared publicly, an audacious move for which the Inquisitors exiled her to a convent.[116] Timur's dreams succoured the notion of the world-conqueror's exceptionalism, at the same time cementing accounts of dreams and omens in literary texts produced, therefore, not only by his heirs, but even by the Ottomans and Safavids.[117] Such recounting in chronicles and biographies of the miracle of a leader's birth or his foresight all helped to enhance his charisma and otherworldly power.

With the steady transformation of religious life across the Indo-Islamicate world, the 'dominant experience of sacred authority for most people – elite and common – was concrete and embodied rather than abstract and textual', in large part due to the spread and appeal of Sufism with its emphasis on the *pir*-*murid* (master-disciple) relationship and the practice of devotion to hereditary *shaikhs* centred on their shrines (§2.2).[118] This model of an embodied form of temporal-political authority intersected with a complementary range of scriptural notions about 'human agents who could usher in and maintain the just religiopolitical order of a particular historical era': the messiah (*mahdi*) and renewer (*mujaddid*), the perfect individual (*insan-i kamil*) and *sahib qiran*. The end of a thousand-year cycle upon the coming of the new millennium in c. 1590–91 was hotly anticipated, for such a figure would then make his appearance, or so it was believed (§3.3.5).[119] By the late sixteenth century, therefore, the Safavid and Mughal rulers embodied a sacrality that very carefully and self-consciously amalgamated these influences – sainthood with messianism and renewal – and which was 'adduced by astrological calculations and mystical lore, embodied in court rituals and dress, visualised in painting, enshrined in architecture, and institutionalised in cults of devotion and bodily submission to the monarch as both saint and king.'[120]

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[115] Ibid, 215–16.

[116] Roper, *Martin Luther's World*, here 42.

[117] See: Menchinger, 'Dreams'; Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 65–76; Quinn, *Persian Historiography*, 62–71.

[118] Moin, *Millennial*, 8.

[119] Ibid, 9.

So much for the broader ideas and currents, but how was this kind of kingship actually fabricated in the Mughal case? Humayun's engagement with the forms of sacred kingship emanating from the Timurid world, 'inspired by emergent Sufi institutions, enshrined in elite knowledges of astrology and alchemy, and enlivened by popular memories of saints and heroes' only gained him a reputation as a 'vain heretic who dabbled in magic.'[121] Humayun's interests may have been derided and decried by his critics, but we ought not be so swayed by such opinions that we overlook how prevalent and popular magical thinking was in Indian society at large, to say nothing of how closely it was linked to kingship in south Asia and across the early modern world (§2.5.2). Philip II, for instance, built a large laboratory of seven or eight rooms with chimneys and special furnaces for the use of the monks at the Escorial, such was his interest in alchemy, and so little conflict was there between the exploration of magical knowledge and his fervent Catholicism.[122] Protestant reformers might have decried the magic of the medieval Church, but the Reformation did little to stem astrology's rising tide, which was of great importance to all sections of English society, from the common man to the Tudor or Stuart monarch. Cardinal Wolsey even 'timed the departure of his French embassy in 1527 to coincide with an astrologically propitious moment.'[123]

During his exile in Safavid Iran, Humayun swapped his crown for the turban of the Safavid *murid* in ritual submission to Shah Tahmasp, whom courtiers revered as the *murshid-i kamil* (the perfect guide). This event was doubly significant: it was occasioned by the very failure of Humayun's own imperial project, a fact he had to grapple with, yet it also demonstrated first-hand the charisma and authority that could be derived from the moulding of millenarian currents and traditions of sainthood, and their articulation within the Timurid-Persianate idiom.[124] All this shows how Mughal rule was steadily imbricated within the evolving milieu of sacred kingship in Islamicate Eurasia, so that Mughal kingship itself came to be inflected with this elision of the saintly and royal. Akbar, however, brought these developments to their apogee, turning discipleship (*muridi*) into an imperial institution. The inauguration of the *din-i ilahi* (§3.3.2) deliberately coincided with an astral conjunction to signal the beginning of a new world order, ushered by Akbar 'as a Lord of the Conjunction like his ancestor Timur, as a saviour like the expected heir of Ali, as an avatar like Rama, as a messiah like Jesus, and as a Renewer of the Second Millennium (Mujaddid-i Alfi-i Thani) of Islam'.[125]

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[120] Ibid, 5.

[121] Ibid, 131. *C.f.* Anooshahr, 'Science', for a critical modification of Moin's analysis of Humayun's interest in the astral sciences, including the notion that inquiry at the court shaped Shattari beliefs to a degree, not merely vice versa.

[122] Parker, *Imprudent King*, 110.

[123] Thomas, *Religion*, 289, for citation, 283–322, for an invaluable survey of the astrology and its role in English society, including discussion of astrology at the royal court, and 367–85, on the antipathy (or not) of Protestants (especially Puritans) towards astrology.

[124] Moin, *Millennial*, 125–29.

Of the various ritual forms of submission by *murid*s, take, for example, the greeting '*allahu akbar*' (God is great) and response '*jalla jalaluhu*' (May His glory be ever glorious): these Arabic salutations seem to be in praise of Allah but, by containing the name of the emperor, Jalal al-Din Akbar, might be interpreted as 'Akbar is God' and 'May Akbar's glory be ever glorious'.[126] This ritual and performative-embodied endeavour was supported by the literary productions of the Akbarid court, not least the *Akbarnama*, which was modelled on Timur's *Zafarnama* and written not by any courtier-historian but a disciple of the emperor's *din-i ilahi*. Histories linking patrons to prior Muslim kings in India were important productions of the early Mughal period, such as the *Tarikh-i Alfi* ('Millennial History') or Khwaja Nizam al-Din Ahmad's *Tabaqat-i Akbari* (c. 1592–93), the latter ranging from Ghaznavid times to Akbar's reign. Such works were counterparts to a near contemporaneous chronicle penned by Firishtah in 1607 for Ibrahim Adil Shah II, a king who also drew on Perso-Islamic languages of kingship, thus also styling himself *sahib qiran*.[127] However, Akbar's intention in commissioning the *Tarikh-i Alfi* was distinctive – namely, to establish himself as the last in a line of great kings, his reign coming at the end of Islam's first thousand year cycle, and thus his role as the *mujaddid* of the second millennium.[128]

This formed Jahangir's inheritance upon his own accession, the new ruler keen to draw on the charisma of his father and coming to do so in time.[129] A connoisseur of painting, Jahangir commissioned pictures to proclaim his sacred kingship, including painted portraits for his disciples. In so doing, and by holding evening dialogues with learned men from different religious communities, he was very much continuing his father's projects (§3.3.3–§3.3.4). Among the pictorial *innovations* of his reign, however, were portrayals of 'royal action taking place on a mythical or metaphysical plane', like the double portrait on facing pages of Muinuddin Chishti and Jahangir, discussed above.[130] In a number of pictures, the emperor stands centrally upon a globe, his position designating his being as the *axis mundi* (*qutb*).[131] In perhaps the most famous of such pictures, Jahangir is centrally positioned in an embrace with Shah Abbas, the two men standing upon a lion and lamb, the company of these two creatures referencing a Biblical allusion and symbol of messianic

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[125] Ibid, 171.

[126] Ibid, 144.

[127] Anooshahr, 'Memory', 275–300, for discussion of these works. On the latter point: Fischel, *Local States*, 175–78.

[128] Moin, *Millennial*, 133–34.

[129] For a balanced discussion of Jahangir's supposed embrace of Islamic orthodoxy and seeming distancing of himself from Akbar's syncretism, versus his drawing on Akbar's innovations in kingly presentation: Moin, *Millennial*, 171–79.

[130] Ibid, citation 193, and analysis 189–92.

[131] Ibid, 195–98.

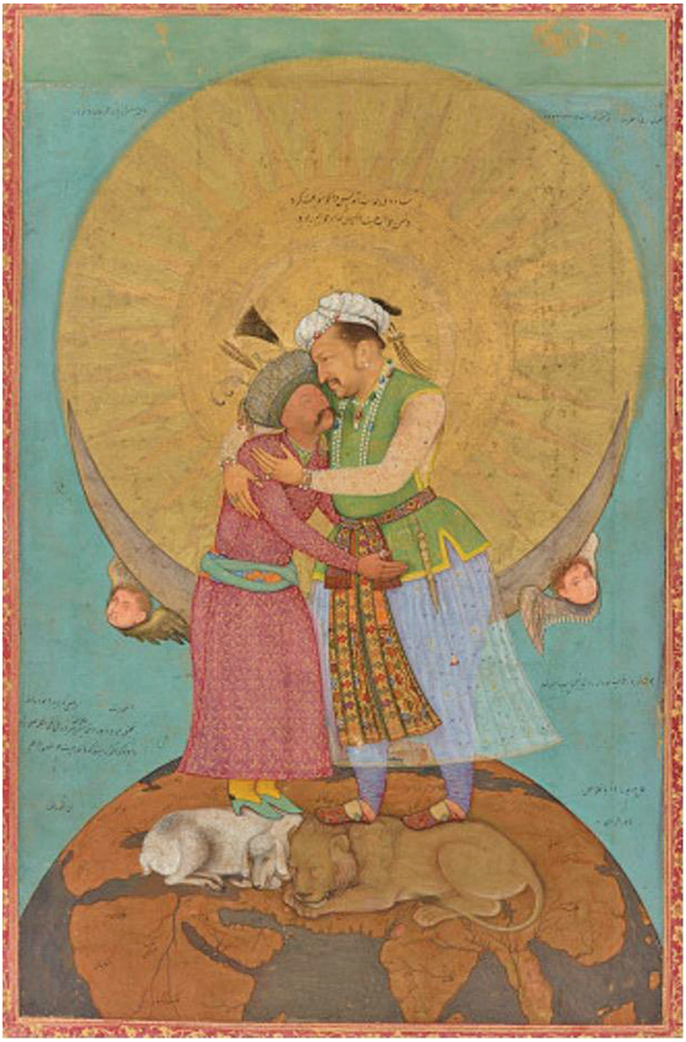

Fig. 8G 'Jahangir Embracing Shah Abbas' (watercolour and metallic paints; painted by Abu'l Hasan; c. 1618)

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peace (Fig. 8G). Jahangir's supernaturalism and superiority are represented by his relatively larger size, and by the enormous solar-lunar nimbus that is being held up by angels and surrounds his head, rendered in precious metals, his divine light thrown over the Safavid ruler.[132] The picture captures a dream of the emperor and presents him as a seer, but was – just as significantly, perhaps – produced after the defeat of Mughal forces by their Safavid rivals in the imperial borderland.[133]

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[132] See, for analysis: Moin, *Millennial*, 204–06.

This last fact points at once to the power and fragility of millenarian and sacred sovereignty. Only circulated after Badauni's death, during the reign of Jahangir, the *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* ('Selected Histories') became a bestseller despite having swiftly been banned by the emperor. Badauni was the translator into Persian of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and a Persian secretary at the Mughal court. In the main a conventional chronicle, the *Muntakhab* criticises Akbar for 'trying to mimic the messianic claims of Shah Ismail', as well as 'tales about Akbar that were "unmentionable" (*na guftan*)'.[134] Badauni related with displeasure the liberty with which Akbar departed from Sunni orthodoxy, signalling that not all were sold on this new kind of kingship: a permissive attitude toward that which was *haram* (proscribed) – including alcohol, the presence of dogs, and the proximity to (and eating of) swine – was bad enough, but the emperor's decree that everyone prostrate in front of him in performance of the *sijda*, the ritual submission performed before God, was especially scandalous in its implication that Akbar considered himself a divine being.[135] Aside from such charges of heresy, millennial fervour was itself destabilising, for there arose a clamour of rival claims voiced by those supposing to be the true *mujaddid*, such as Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. And, of course, rival princes were often the focus of transigent Islamic loyalties that had the effect of moderating the emperor's sacral claims to kingly authority (§7.3.1).

How did imperial *muridi* fare over the seventeenth century, when, from around the tenth year of Shah Jahan's reign, the emperor moved toward reconciliation of life within the court and country at large with the demands voiced by the Sunni *ulama*?[136] There was sufficient room for Shah Jahan to placate the *ulama* while continuing to express his sovereignty within established idioms. On the one hand, the emperor could reinstitute imperial patronage of the Hajj, implement strictures against the building or repair of non-Muslims' places of worship, and transform *muridi* into the institution of hereditary service and kinship to the emperor (*khanazadgi*).[137] On the other hand, Shah Jahan could favour as his heir the intellectually esoteric Dara Shukoh rather than the more legalistic and *sharia*-minded (if not quite puritanical) Aurangzeb; order the building of the Taj Mahal, the whole scheme of which was inspired by theological and mystical ideas (§9.3.1); draw connection between himself and Solomon; and style himself *sahib qiran-i sani*, this title having currency not in Islamic scripture but in diverse bodies of astrological thought.[138]

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[133] Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 265–79, for the emperors' correspondences from this time.

[134] Moin, *Millennial*, citations 136 and 153, respectively. A few years after Badauni and his collaborators produced the main text, Abu al-Fazl wrote a preface to the *Razmnama* in which he accorded the non-Islamic Indian text the power to overturn Islamic theology: Truschke, *Culture*, 126–33.

[135] Note that Badauni was not averse to the power of saints and messiahs – quite the contrary, in fact – merely that he objected to the character of Akbar's claims of sacred kingship: Moin, *Millennial*, 155–61.

[136] For a reproduction of a picture of the emperor Shah Jahan on a globe, very much in a pictorial lineage traceable to the imagery of his father discussed above, see: Asher and Talbot, *India*, 236.

[137] Moin, *Millennial*, 218.

One way of comprehending these divergences is to distinguish the rhetorical and textual domains of his kingship, which conformed to scriptural Islam, from the visual and performative, which transgressed it, as Moin highlights in his work.[139] Take, for instance, the emperor's appearance at the *jharoka-i darshan*, where he received the supplication of petitioners, embassies from foreign powers, and marked festivals and auspicious events (including Nowruz, which was not strictly Islamic but its celebration justified by Islamic scholars, nonetheless). These were especially constructed for Shah Jahan as stages for the performance of his embodied, sacred kingship, and their precise positioning was dictated by solar cosmologies.[140]

8.4 *Shahanshah-i Giti-Sitan* (King of the World-Conquering Kings): The Mughals, Universal Sovereignty, and Global Rivalries

Two pictures, produced only a quarter-century yet thousands of miles apart, are striking in their resemblance. The older, painted around 1592 by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, is the famous 'Ditchley Portrait' of Queen Elizabeth I. The queen made powerful use of her portrait, which was painted regularly, reproduced widely, and was replete with very consciously chosen symbols. For their part, her nobility displayed an eagerness at acquiring such pictures and making them a central part of their collections, often hung surrounded by likenesses of themselves and their family members to visually set forth patrimonial ties between the royal line and their own dynasties.[141] Gloriana stands upon a globe in life-size in the Ditchley Portrait, for the canvas is almost two-and-a-half metres tall, the visible portion of that globe showing her English domains, her ancestors having begun the colonial reconquest of Ireland a few decades prior. The picture was painted for Sir Henry Lee, whom the queen had forgiven and brought back into her favour, and possibly commemorates an elaborate entertainment organised for the monarch either at Lee's seat at

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[138] Aurangzeb did, from time to time, use the sacred kingly inheritance of his forebears; Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 333–34. For an interrogation of Aurangzeb's conception of political sovereignty, and the shift away from sacral and embodied kingship to the king as a font of the law, see: Kaicker, *The King*, 102–07.

[139] Moin, *Millennial*, 225.

[140] Ibid, 219–24.

[141] See: Strong, *Gloriana*, with discussion of the Ditchley Portrait on 134–41, and portrait medallions worn around the neck on 121–24. This last was roughly contemporaneous with painted cameos of Akbar being worn in the turbans of his disciples: Richards, *Mughal*, 47–48. See, also: §3.3.2.

Ditchley or the nearby palace at Woodstock.[142] The message of forgiveness is communicated in numerous ways: her feet resting on Oxfordshire, Ditchley being in that county; the allegory of the parting of the storm clouds (on the right) to reveal bright skies (left); and a number of Latin inscriptions, interpretable as 'She gives and does not expect', 'She can but does not take revenge', and 'In giving back she increases'.[143] The subject of the sonnet in the middle-right of the picture is the sun – a symbol of Elizabeth and other monarchs long before the birth of the Sun King, Louis XIV.

At twenty-three centimetres in length, scarcely a tenth of the size of the Ditchley Portrait, is Abu al-Hasan's famous allegorical representation of a meeting of Jahangir and Shah Abbas discussed in the previous section. An obvious difference between the two images can be mentioned outright: whereas the Ditchley Portrait was commissioned by a high-ranking royal servant, Jahangir was the patron of the latter picture, perhaps even supervising its production in 1618.[144] A number of similarities are also obvious, however. First, that the Mughal and Safavid rulers stand on a globe; the Timurid dynast upon a lion sprawled out on his ancestral homeland in central Asia, his companion on a lamb curled over the Safavid domains, the riches of Mughal India stretching out before them toward the bottom margin. Second, that this is also a commemorative image, except a portent rather than an actual event is its subject. And third, that themes of forgiveness and submission are also evident, as is the symbolism of the sun and the use of allegory. Comparison of the two pictures is tantalising. Could the former have informed the latter?[145]

Elizabeth I was repeatedly pictured with globes, the visible portion of which or what was covered by her hand – the Americas, as in the famous 'Armada Portrait' – indicating her expanding domains.[146] A steady stream of European pictures found their way to the Mughal court, injecting miniature painting with new compositional forms, subjects, and symbols that worked with Mughal ideas, such as the halo or nimbus (§9.3.2). Globes and atlases were also gifted by the Europeans to the Mughal emperors (§10.4). Thus, whether a copy of the Ditchley Portrait or a similar picture served as a prototype, or whether Mughal artists coincidentally saw in globes the same potential identified by their counterparts in England, the globe entered Mughal art around this time, becoming a feature of Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's portraits. Just as Mughal artists' appropriation of the halo from European art intersected with the court's ongoing engagement with various strands of thought about light and illumination originating in the Indo-Islamicate world, so, too, was Mughal artists' appropriation of new cartographic ideas emerging in Europe used in ways that fit with the court's claims about its sovereignty. Jahangir was, as his regnal name suggests, a 'world-seizer' – but where or what was that world over which he was sovereign?[147]

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[142] Yates, *Astraea*, 89–95, for Lee's wider implication in Elizabethan imperialism.

[143] 'Queen Elizabeth I' aka 'The Ditchley Portrait' (Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger; c. 1592; oil on canvas), National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 2561, which can be viewed online via the collection database.

[144] On Jahangir's interest in art and instruction/supervision of his artists, see: §9.3.2.

[145] English paintings were viewed by Mughal artists and perhaps had a great impact because all European artworks hitherto brought to the atelier were prints: Beach, *Imperial Image*, 30–31.

[146] There are actually three versions of the Armada Portrait: Strong, *Gloriana*, 130–33.

The mid-seventeenth century Mughal court was among the most cosmopolitan the world over, receiving representation from across Eurasia, not to mention reflecting the diversity of the subcontinent itself. Chandar Bhan Brahman took pains to describe all those who assembled in the Hall of Special and General Audience. They were masters of the sword and of the pen, from khans and sultans, to their *wazirs*, *mirs* (princes), and *mirzas*. There were also 'elite *sayyid*s, great *shaikhs*, eminent scholars, ingenious doctors and agreeable courtiers of various classes', and those merchant princes trying to make their fortunes in India.[148] They hailed from all the major ports and polities around the Indian Ocean world, from Abyssinia to China; from across continental Eurasia's worlds of settled and sown between the Ottoman Mediterranean, Russia, and Turkestan; not to mention those Europeans also present – official representatives of European states, but also of trading companies and Christian missions. The Indians and Afghans belonged to the great warrior clans and royal lineages, as well as notable scribal and priestly communities, the dizzying range of ethno-linguistic, occupational, and caste groups of the subcontinent listed by Chandar Bhan amidst all the cities and countries from beyond the Mughal realm that manifested their presence before the Mughal *padshah*. When the 'Great Moghul' claimed universal sovereignty, therefore, he staked his claim in front of such an assembly, some of whom even had the privilege of seeing pictures of the world-conquering king standing atop the globe.

One conception of universal sovereignty consists in a ruler's command over an unrestricted domain; they were sovereign of all peoples and places, and potentially a great king-of-kings in a hierarchic or stacked conception of lordship and statehood. This idea of universal sovereignty flourished in the early modern world: having nearly dwindled 'into a local German concern,' Anthony Pagden writes, the Holy Roman Empire took on 'once more something of its old significance' under Charles V, whose territorial claims ringed the globe.[149] Sycophantic contemporaries called him *dominus mundi* or 'Lord of the World', while the *conquistador* of Mexico, Hernán Cortés, addressed him duly as 'king of kings' and 'monarch of the Universe'.[150] The eventual break-up of the Habsburg monarchy into two branches (Spanish, central European) meant this was not politically lasting, yet nor was it merely a 'phantom revival' of the 'universal imperialist hope'. Charles V's imperialist grandeur 'endured and exercised an almost undying influence', not least because the 'imperial theme' – as Frances Yates put it so pithily – was translated to England and France's national monarchies. Elizabeth I, for instance, was often portrayed as 'Astraea, the just virgin of the golden age' in poems and plays by Shakespeare and Spenser and countless others, for hers was an epoch of national expansion and the Crown's supremacy over both Church and state consistently linked in Elizabethan thought to notions of universal and sacred empire.[151]

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[147] Ramaswamy, 'Conceit', 760, 769.

[148] Kinra, 'Handling Diversity', 253–54, for this excerpt based on his own translation of the *Chahar Chaman*. See, also: §7.2.3.

[149] Yates, *Astraea*, 1.

[150] Rady, *Habsburgs*, 64; Pagden, *Lords*, especially 29–46.

Universal sovereignty need not involve a limitless domain: with the conquest of the Americas, the Habsburgs really could dream of mastery over a truly world state for a time, whereas Louis XIV's ambition for his *monarchia universalis* centred on obtaining mastery over Europe.[152] Geography was inextricably linked to universalist thought, but so, too, was history. 'Ancient prophesies' played a vital part in fleshing out the Habsburg's claims to global greatness and temporal leadership, much as they gave gravitas to the more modest claims of English kings to rule over Great Britain.[153] Although the universalist idea had many forms and moorings, it bears remembering that these were not newly invented in early modern times but of long pedigree, perhaps best epitomised by the Roman empire-builder, Julius Caesar, as well as the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great. Both figures were invoked by rulers from western Europe to the Islamic world in the articulation of their own universalist ideologies. For example, Ferdowsi's *Shahnama* celebrated Alexander (Iskander) among other real and legendary kings, so that the medieval Persian epic maintained its currency for centuries in royal courts, with the Safavid and Mughal rulers both patronising the reproduction and illustration of the text, meanwhile also referencing Iskander in connection with their kingship.[154]

Early modern globalisation led to the intensification of monarchical rivalries, borrowings, and reachings into the past. The Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry is said to have reached a fever pitch by the 1520s, as the two powers competed over central Europe and the Mediterranean, and as the latter linked the Old World and the New.[155] Thereafter, the performance of kingly power became truly global in scope with the creation of the Iberian viceroyalties, which enabled the (Spanish) Habsburg monarch to 'move' from the Old World to the New in the form of his viceroy – quite literally the king's living image. It was the viceroy's role to mirror the king's celestial court and act as an exemplary centre for the king's distant subjects, achieved through various rituals, processions, and pomp enacted on a 'stage-set' of palaces and triumphal arches especially constructed in the urban centres of the American colonies.[156] Such developments influenced French and English imperialism, with Elizabethan globalism also influencing Mughal universalism, as we have seen, not to mention the effects of Mughal and Ottoman rivalry.[157] All this points to the highly complex, imbricated dialectic of competition and convergence in kingly presentation rippling this way and that across a vast terrain.

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[151] Yates, *Astraea*, 31, 39, for citations, and 29–87 for analysis.

[152] Louis' critics did not fail to point out how shrunken his hopes were in comparison to other would-be universal sovereigns: Pagden, *Lords*, 4.

[153] Rady, *Habsburgs*; Thomas, *Religion*, 415–22.

[154] Brend and Melville, *Epic*.

[155] Adelman, 'Mimesis', 82, for citation, and 83. See, also: Pagden, *Lords*, for the dialogue of Spanish, French, and British imperial ideology in the Americas.

At the same time, however, we ought not lose sight of powers already in fairly close contact, for some were likewise emboldened to make very audacious moves in the enlargement of their authority. Chinese dynasties had long sought legitimacy with reference to broadly Confucian ideas about the idealised world with a ruler at the centre of the Middle Kingdom granted the Mandate of Heaven, and a world of tributary states beyond. These very ideas – originating from within the Han cultural world – were being appropriated by the early seventeenth century not only by the Qing conquerors from beyond the Han-sphere as they sought to claim the Mandate and thus seize China from the Ming, but also by Korean (Choson) and Japanese (Tokugawa) dynastic states, hitherto ruled by a figure who was treated as a vassal of the Chinese emperor. The result was that the Korean and Japanese states pressed their superiority over the Qing while the latter tried to take China, so that, as Evelyn Rawski makes clear, the whole order of Chinese universalism was being upturned at the margins even as it was reinvigorated at the centre.[158]

And, finally, it would be unwise to overlook the powerful *critique* of universal monarchy within the metropole itself.[159] The endurance of the imperial theme and associated notions of universalism in the seventeenth century is truly remarkable. The possibility of a universal monarch presiding over a universal empire was increasingly doubted at the very same time it was derided by the likes of the political philosopher and legal theorist, Hugo Grotius (1583–1645). It would eventually become, by the nineteenth century, a distasteful relic (at worst) or romantic ideal (at best).[160]

The metaphor of the globe in the portraits of Elizabeth I and Jahangir demonstrates these contradictory currents, one undergirding and the other undermining universal sovereignty. As knowledge of the terrestrial globe – geographic and political – was expanded and improved, so the (limited) reach of a particular king's rule was placed in perspective. As the circulation of people both quickened in pace and widened in scale, so kings were more frequently confronted with representatives from other states, near and far. On the one hand, the globe became – like the Mughal court's enterprises in translation and the production of dictionaries and grammars (§3.3.3) – a technology of power, a means of representing (global) domination. In this aspect, new knowledge of cartography or geography and newfound opportunities for the receipt of foreign emissaries were enthusiastically put to the task of fabricating a royal identity based on universalism – a universalism effected either through conquest and expansion or through the submission of tributaries and vassals. Herein lies the significance, then, of the rituals of submission and receipt of honour (*nazr* and *khilat*) undertaken not only with Mughal nobles but also visitors from other lands, and of the proclamation of universal civility or *sulh-i kull* (§3.3.4). Herein lies the significance, too, of the global luxuries received from the universal monarch's supplicants that are deliberately incorporated into Mughal pictures; objects such as Italian furniture and drinking vessels, Chinese porcelain, Venetian glass, and a clockwork statuette of Diana on a stag from Augsburg depicted in Jahangiri painting, for instance.[161]

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[156] Cañeque, *Living Image*.

[157] Yates, *Astraea*, 121–48.

[158] Rawksi, 'Sons', especially 237, 242–48.

[159] Pagden, *Lords*, 46–62.

[160] Bang and Kołodziejczyk, 'Elephant', 3–7.

On the other hand, the globe served as a reckoning, for it made manifest the expanding frontiers of knowledge, including of imperial rivals' dominions. In the portrait with Shah Abbas, Jahangir's placement at the head of the Indian subcontinent and astride his ancestral lands in Timurid Eurasia reflected what succoured and what undermined his kingly identity. It conveyed knowledge of the geography of the Mughal realm but also a consciousness of the limits of his temporal power as a king, even one who proclaimed himself the king-of-kings (*shahanshah*). It forged a link between the Mughal family and their famous world-conquering ancestor (Timur) to bolster what was perhaps a precarious – if not fragile – universalism, while more or less desperately tempering the claims of rival, royal dynasties. That history might repeat itself could also be a source of anguish, however. Just as Humayun found refuge at the court of Shah Tahmasp, where he pledged subservience to the Sufi *murid*-cum-king and received Safavid aid in the reconquest of Hindustan, so Shah Suleiman (r. 1666–94) wrote to Aurangzeb to mock the latter's inability to subdue Shivaji, pointedly offering his military assistance to invoke the memory of the dynasty's earlier humiliation.[162] Just as the Mughals forged a link to their Timurid ancestry by building Timurid-style buildings and laying out Timurid-style gardens, feasting and entertaining their guests and nobles in such spaces, so the Safavids kept alive the memory of Mughal fealty rather vividly at the audience hall of the Chihil Sultan Palace at Isfahan, where visitors could look upon a huge mural depicting this prior episode in Safavid-Mughal relations.[163]

Overall, then, we can say that the quickening and broadening of global connection contributed to mimesis and convergence in monarchical presentation as well as competition, serving at once to puff-up Mughal kingly presentation to certain audiences and yet to dampen or circumscribe Mughal sovereignty before others.[164] Here, an instructive comparison can be made with their Ottoman rivals, who were able to draw upon the symbolic capital and resources of the Byzantine Empire, following the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, and of the guardianship of the Holy Places, after taking the Hejaz in 1517. In their official stylings, they employed the Arabic term sultan; this was actually the least prestigious title, for it could refer to any ruler within or beyond the Ottoman domains. To distinguish themselves, therefore, Ottoman rulers employed a range of other titles side-by-side with sultan: the Turko-Mongolic term khan, used because they conquered the former Chinggisid domains and because of the appeal of any connection with Chinggis and Timur; Persian terms such as *shah* and *padshah*, as well as *kayser* (Caesar) and *kisra* (Cyrus); honorifics drawing on Alexander the Great (Iskander) or the Byzantine emperor (such as *basileus*); and the mantle of *khalifa* (caliph).[165] The Ottoman Chancery only rarely and unwillingly referred to other rulers as *padshahs*: the Habsburg emperors were referred to as the 'kings of Vienna' until 1606, although they were not truly accorded equal status even thereafter, while the Spanish Habsburgs were merely addressed as the 'kings of Spain'.[166] The Mughals were never accorded the title of *padshah* despite employing it in their own correspondence, having grudgingly conceded the Ottoman ruler's right to use the term *khalifa*.[167] In all this, the Ottomans shifted carefully between titles as part of a conscious code-switching, depending on which constituency within the multi-ethnic and geographically-extensive empire they were facing, or else as circumstances dictated. Suleyman's failure to control Hungary, for example, prevented him from using the title *sahib qiran* – with its Timurid associations and prolific use by the Mughal rulers – until his successes against the Habsburgs signalled that he was – to an Ottoman audience – the true recipient of that title.[168]

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[161] Koch, 'Mughal Padshahs', 201–02.

[162] Moin, *Millennial*, 235.

[163] Ibid, 235–37, where it is noted that the mural was one of four, the others showing the foundational Safavid victory over the Uzbeks in Shah Ismail's time and the later refuge given to Uzbek rulers at the Safavid court.

Similarly, Mughal correspondence provides a window onto the ways competition with rivals forged convergences in kingly presentation. Shah Abbas, for example, reproached Akbar for not writing to offer congratulations upon his accession to the Safavid throne in 1587, reminding his Indian counterpart of the Mughals' indebtedness to the Safavid house. Akbar took four years to reply, rebuking Shah Abbas for invoking a debt that had been spent and reminding him that the Mughal house had, in himself, produced the greater monarch. This last was achieved not only by outlining recent victories, but also by offering advice on government; specifically – for these were the years in which he established the *dini-i ilahi* and proclaimed *sulh-i kull* – by scolding the Safavid king for not being broad church in outlook.[169] This set the tenor of Mughal-Safavid relations in Jahangir's reign even as the Mughals continued to selectively borrow from Persian culture and tradition to fabricate their kingship.[170] In contrast, Akbar had taken a rather different tone in an earlier letter of 1582 to Philip II. Instead of proclaiming his universal sovereignty, he presented himself as an equal to the Iberian king. Philip II had just become ruler of Portugal and its empire, which extended to Goa – where he was represented by a viceroy – and was thus a potential ally for the Mughals against the Ottomans.[171] What the Mughals perceived as the Ottoman threat in the western Indian Ocean was, as far as the Ottoman centre was concerned, the sultan's pressing of his universal sovereignty. These claims were notably juridical in nature, the consequence of the Ottoman encounter with representatives of the Portuguese monarch in and around the Red Sea, as Giancarlo Casale's work valuably brings to light.[172]

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[164] Bang and Kołodziejczyk, 'Elephant', 25–27, for the example of how Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry dialectically shaped mimesis and convergence in kingly presentation.

[165] Kołodziejczyk, 'Khan', 177–78, 181–89.

[166] Ibid, 178.

[167] Ibid, 179–81.

[168] Şahin, *Empire*, 62.

[169] Koch, 'Mughal Padshahs', 194–95.

For all this bluster, however, it should be emphasised that two aspects can be distinguished within Mughal claims to universalism, and here it is useful to return to Chandar Bhan Brahman's description of the representation received at the imperial court.[173] First, there was the Mughal realm proper in all its diversity; those places, peoples, and layers of authority brought under Mughal control through conquest and accord. In placing Mughal kingship in a global frame, one must not lose sight of this dimension of Mughal universalism – this geographically circumscribed yet nonetheless impressive embrace of the diversity of the Indian subcontinent. Second, however, was the whole world beyond Mughal India, over whose rulers the Mughal *padshah* made bold yet blurry claims of supremacy; here is universalism in its grander and more unattainable yet more commonly understood form as absolute rule over an unrestricted domain.

Were these different kinds of universalism and did they lead to discrete claims about a ruler's universal sovereignty for distinct audiences? Or were they somehow linked, as Ali Anooshahr suggests in a study of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*? To make sense of this possibility, it bears remembering that the architects of *sulh-i kull* were those avant-garde thinkers also at work on Akbar's 'Millennial History' (§2.5.2). The practice of *sulh-i kull* and dialogue with various groups necessarily involved recognising and reifying religious and other communities, rulers and their territories; one could only extend universal peace to Jains, say, or to the Safavids/Iranians if one had distinguished them in the first place. This logic operated in a portion of the *Tarikh* in which one finds among the first clear conceptions of 'Mughal Hindustan' as a territorialised and thus delimited entity; likewise, Safavid Iran and the Ottoman realm beyond. What distinguished the Mughal king as greater – and made him a universal sovereign even as he ruled over a restricted domain – was that he was the wellspring of the ‘universal peace’.[174]

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[170] Ibid, *passim*.

[171] Ibid, 196–98.

[172] Casale, *Ottoman*.

[173] Here, students may find Pagden's discussion of the meanings of 'imperium' in pre-1800 Europe in *Lords*, 12–17, a useful and complementary discussion, for that term could variously be taken to mean 'limited and independent or "perfect" rule', or 'a territory embracing more than one political community', or even 'the absolute sovereignty of a single individual' – *Lords*, 17.

8.5 Conclusion

Let us return to the portraits of Elizabeth I and Jahangir. The former commemorated an actual event and was commissioned by, and for, a high-ranking Tudor serviceman. It was large and placed on display in Lee’s home. It was made to be seen by his contemporaries, a reminder to men of his social standing of his return to the queen’s favour. The second was produced under the Mughal emperor’s direction and was intended to remain within the royal collection. The issue of who would (not) have seen such pictures has been a vexed one, but a consensus has formed around the following ideas.[175] First, that manuscripts and miniature paintings were small and sometimes expensive items but were not trifles produced for their own sake. A commission was often supervised by the emperor or another courtier through to completion, testament to the importance of words and images *combined* to kingship. Second, that although few people would have been shown or given access to these works, librarians’ marks, the recension of (portions of) texts, and the copying of imagery all demonstrate that they were inspected by successive emperors, the imperial family, and members of the nobility, and also consulted by artisans and litterateurs. A small audience does not entail these works’ insignificance, especially when one considers that an act of artistic or literary patronage had a lengthy afterlife, with works seen by successive generations, thus often being produced with a view to posterity in the first place.[176] Thinking about audiences is important, as is consideration of the means, purposes, and critics of kingly (re)presentations. By way of conclusion, then, a few tentative responses to those questions posed at the start of this chapter are in order.

How – that is, through what media, means, and with reference to which ideas or concepts – was the king’s authority fabricated? Mughal authority lay atop the power and right of a plethora of horizontally competing and vertically stacked stakeholders spread over a vast and highly heterogeneous area.[177] The sequence of Mughal emperors not only had their own distinct identities; they also faced many different audiences or constituencies, thus shifting points of emphasis in their self-presentation. The influences on their kingship were more multitudinous than can be neatly summarised here, save to highlight that they: were Sunnis yet open to Shiʿi beliefs and practices, as well as those associated with Sufi holy men, including the very idea of *muridi*; made use of their Timurid descent, adopting such titles as *sahib qiran*; emerged from within the Persianate sphere and acted as patrons of Persian language and culture; embedded themselves within the Indian ecumene at large (and Rajput tradition, more specifically) in their dress and rituals, not least *darshan*; and tapped into those millenarian and messianic currents that rippled across the early modern world. To this can be added ideas of illumination and the importance of receiving and (re)presenting the king's divine light, the significance given to miraculous events and dreams, and different conceptions of universalism.

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[174] See: Anooshahr, ‘Mughal History’.

[175] Asher, ‘Sun’, 175–76.

[176] That said, reproduction did not mean (close or careful) reading of a work, as Truschke notes: *Culture*, 211–14.

[177] Anooshahr, ‘Imperial Discourse’, here 161, and *passim*, goes some way to finding an essential consistency in the different elements constitutive of Mughal imperial sovereignty.

This chapter has discussed the role of architecture – imperial palaces and gardens, as well as more overtly public sites, such as tombs and monuments – as ceremonial stages for the performance of kingship, as representations of kingly identity, and as lasting reminders of the exercise of the wise and just rule of particular kings. Alongside such visual or material productions can be added manuscripts and miniature paintings in which a ruler's identity was fabricated for their self-legitimation, if not also as part of their self-presentation. A range of texts – works of history, genealogy, and biography, but also religious texts, lexicons and glossaries, as well as correspondences and the titles they contained – were the other vehicles for the fabrication and expression of kingly identity. Texts and images also allow historians to retrieve the world of ritual and performance through which Mughal kingship was presented, for they contain conscious re-presentations of such events and occurrences. Through such means and media, it was possible not only to celebrate the Mughal *padshah*s' heroic conquests and role as *ghazi sultan*s, but also proclaim their centrality to the cosmic order and love of peace, their role as patrons and connoisseurs of culture and learning, and their virtues – magnanimity, mercy, piety.

How was criticism of kingly authority voiced, by whom, and for what purposes? Much as Louis XIV was accused of *divertissement*, in the double sense of putting the populace to sleep or distracting them with spectacular entertainments, so this chapter has tried to critically reflect on the aims of the Mughal kings and their critics alike. Mughal kingship drew together recent and older Turko-Mongolic, Persianate, Islamicate, Indic, and even Hellenic religious, royal, and intellectual traditions, a fact celebrated by liberal historians.[178] Openness to these influences – distinct yet already swirling together in pre-Mughal times – was always political, however, a fact not sufficiently captured by the rather benign terminology of 'syncretism' and 'composite cultures', 'multiculturalism' and 'cosmopolitanism'. On the one hand, were those empowered by the imperial project, not only high-ranking nobles, such as Raja Man Singh or Abd al-Rahim Khan-i Khanan, but also those Brahmans and Jains involved in the translation of Sanskrit knowledge into Persian, some even penning panegyrics praising the emperor or else writing favourably about the Mughals in their own histories (§3.3.3). On the other hand, there were so many political rivals, who were disenfranchised by – or even despised the very notion of – the Mughal imperium, as well as members of the *ulama* and men of orthodox Sunni belief like Badauni, who were alienated and profoundly troubled by what they perceived as the heresies perpetrated by the emperor and his court. Badauni may not have openly criticised the emperor during his lifetime, yet others – Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, for instance – tapped into millenarian currents and disputed the emperor's claim of being the *mujaddid*.[179] A less risky strategy was for learned men to pen a treatise in the genre of advice literature, as some Mughal and Ottoman writers sought to do by way of critique.[180]

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[178] For a critique of these etic categories, and an alternative analysis based on more *emic* concepts: Anooshahr, 'Imperial Discourse'.

How was kingship reconstituted or transformed during transfers of power from one monarch to his successor? The Timurid connection was realised through performance and commemorative architecture early in Babur's reign over Hindustan, but the Mughals were always aware of the limitations of rooting their legitimacy in Timurid concepts and ancestry at this juncture. Once the threat posed by their rivals dissipated and Mughal gains were consolidated, the dynasty more readily cultivated the Timurid connection and harvested its fruit – in their titles and ceremonial, in literary works and visual culture, for example. Yet, by Akbar's reign, it became necessary to break the power of those central Asian nobles who remained a source of disquiet and outright rebellion, either because of their egalitarian and independent spirit and their desire for an equal share of the spoils, which entailed an unwillingness to submit to an almighty king (§7.1.1), or else because they hailed from aristocratic lineages that looked down on the Mughals.[181] At this point, the Mughals looked to their Rajput servicemen and the swelling Iranian contingent, which permitted the exploitation of Indic and Persianate kingly traditions in the fabrication of Akbar's kingship, involving a much more hierarchical organisation of authority, reinforced through ritual and performance.

The Jahangiri and Shah Jahani eras saw the ongoing development of kingly identity, differing as power was transferred from father to son, but – broadly speaking – travelling along a trajectory: at once increasingly cosmopolitan, in reflection of the Mughal realm's place in the world, yet also speaking to an alienated Sunni *ulama*, with whom a rapprochement was needed. This is not to say that Mughal kingship was the product of circumstances rather than personalities. Advisors such as Abu al-Fazl played their part, as did the emperors themselves, whose personal interests shaped the character of their kingly identity and the manner of its presentation, not to mention the artists and writers literally (re)producing the kingly image. Aside from such clichés as Jahangir the intellectual and connoisseur or Aurangzeb the *ghazi-sultan*, furthermore, this chapter has drawn on recent work to highlight the shifting patronage of different Sufi orders and lineages as part of the imperial centre's developing spiritual-intellectual (and political) interests under different monarchs. In spite of all this, finally, certain aspects of Mughal kingship were broadly continuous or developed rather gradually: rituals of submission and investiture or presentation for *darshan*, for instance.

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[179] According to Mughal sources, the execution of the fifth Sikh *guru*, Arjan (d. 1606), was due to his support for Prince Khusrau, during the latter's ill-fated coup in 1605 of the Mughal throne from his father, Jahangir. Richards notes that Jahangir was 'consistently hostile to popularly venerated religious figures', perhaps most acutely around the time of his succession due to feelings of political insecurity; Richards, *Mughal*, 97.

[180] Alvi, trans., *Advice*, for a Jahangiri-era mirror for princes text in translation.

[181] On the latter point, see: Anooshahr, 'Mongrels'. Turani readers of the *Tarikh-i Alfi*, Anooshahr claims in 'Mughal History', were basically being offered a clear vision of the new identity they would have to assume if they wished to survive.

How were kingly identities and ideology reinforced over the course of the king's reign, in which his glory was inevitably punctured by episodic defeat or failure? Here it is crucial to remember that kingly identity was not defined once and for all at the start of a monarch's reign in ways that might have made it stable and unchanging. Akbar's monarchy, for example, changed in character as Bairam Khan's regency came to an end and continued to develop in his adult life, as evinced by his cultivation of relations with the Chishtiya, only then to distance himself from Sufi lineages in the 1570s and the years in which he formulated the *din-i ilahi*. A limitation of the present analysis has been a focus on the Mughal classical age, largely because studies of kingly identity have focused on the first Mughal emperors. Or, to put it differently, most scholars have focused on the very period of expanding Mughal hegemony, when devastating setbacks were few. What is missing from the analysis is how kingly self-presentation evolved during the eighteenth century in response to the assertiveness of new powerholders and the retreat of Mughal territorial control. What is clear, however, is that such a factor as Timurid charisma could be used to accentuate success but also gloss over defeat, as evident from its use in Jahangir and Shah Jahan's reigns. That said, evidence presented in this chapter also makes plain that monarchs were conscious not to make hollow claims about their supremacy and made pious or practical undertakings, like public building works, in periods of relative weakness.

And, finally, who constituted the 'public' or audience to kingly (re)presentations, whose opinion was being moulded or manipulated? The Mughal centre was peripatetic, the emperor embarking on pilgrimages and on tours of his realm, which provided opportunities to meet certain nobles and holy men. The imperial camp and its procession was a moving majesty, giving ordinary folk a glimpse of monarchy. Such occurrences ought not be understood only in functional terms, nor did all go as courtiers had planned or as chroniclers subsequently had it: the aim may have been to overawe subjects, but processions and public events were also opportunities for local elites to grab some attention, while the disaffected might mount popular resistance to royalty.[182] Sometimes, nevertheless, the Mughal king might have come more directly into contact with the public, when distributing alms on the occasion of religious festivals or celebrations at palaces and monuments, for instance, as well as the daily presentation for *darshan* and the reception of petitioners. These appearances and performances – in person, otherwise *in absentia* – were complemented by the representation made by imperial servicemen, who projected the imperial image through their own building works, even as they pursued their own claims to authority via the very same undertakings.

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[182] Here, I take my cue from Ruiz, *King Travels*, especially 99–104, 159–92. See, also: Kaicker, *The King*.

All this lends credence to Kaya Şahin's observation that the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal rulers all employed elaborate new ceremonies and public rituals 'to create ideological and cultural links between sovereigns and subjects', so that what has long been seen as part and parcel of Renaissance culture and the patronage of European monarchies was, in fact, a much broader phenomenon.[183] At the same time, however, the presentation of Mughal kingship was aimed at a narrower audience. It most often took place in intimate surroundings and its audience was largely constituted of the imperial family and imperial servicemen, whose continued loyalty and service mattered to the integrity of the empire, and of visitors from other realms, whose recollections transported the king's majesty to the courts of their own masters, whether in the nearby Deccan Sultanates or the abode of the Ottoman sultan in Constantinople. It was also for the king himself, since it was through his self-presentation and re-presentation that his monarchical ideology was fabricated – a fact that has perhaps been overlooked by historians keen to identify the sources of political 'legitimacy'.

Royalty, noted the historical anthropologist of India, Bernard Cohn, was essential to the Indian social order – so it is perhaps not entirely surprising that the mascot of newly-independent India's national carrier was an Indian *maharaja* (great king).[184] As evinced by numerous examples throughout this chapter, Mughal kingship was highly historically reflexive, drawing on extant or older royal traditions, political and philosophical treatises, and so forth. In turn, numerous elements of what became identifiable with Mughal kingship and ideology were codified into what Bernard Cohn termed the 'Mughal idiom' as they were emulated, appropriated, and adapted by (new) rulers fashioning their own kingdoms and fabricating their own presentation over the eighteenth century.[185] It was part of the invention of tradition, the Mughal idiom remaining so palpable – long after the political centre of gravity had shifted from Shahjahanabad to more radiant courts – as to become part of the pomp and ritual of British India (§9.3).[186]

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[183] Şahin, *Empire*, 51. See: Ruiz, *King Travels*, for a rich study focussing on Philip II's Spain.

[184] Cohn, *Colonialism*, 113–14. To this it may be added the example of Shivaji's coronation and debates about caste in an age of *adharma* (disorder), described in §2.1.2. See, also: Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam, 'Ideologies', on the cosmic discourses of imperialism in Vijayanagara and some of its successor states.

[185] This was also true within the Mughal world itself, with Mughal architecture continuing to evolve while remaining historically reflexive, consciously referencing the 'golden age' as the empire retreated in the eighteenth century: Chanchal, *Architecture*.

So potent were the languages of Mughal kingship that its forms – if not its content – inspired the Mughals' rivals and successors, too: even a ruling house as hostile to Mughal authority as the Rajput Sisodiyas took to promoting their genealogy, emphasising their supposed descent from Rama's solar dynasty, as a foil to the Mughals' Timurid connections, to say nothing of the emulation of Mughal sovereignty at the Sikh courts of the later gurus.[187] Indeed, this emphasis on Mughal kingship and on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is neither to suggest the regional states of eighteenth century did not witness new developments in kingly presentation, nor that Indian kingly presentation outside the Mughal realm (in the Deccan Sultanates and the coastal kingdoms, for instance) was unchanging in the same period, even if it has not been possible in this chapter to give them over to scrutiny. It was to the eighteenth century that C.A. Bayly traced the origins of new patriotisms, often based around regional identities and locality, which developed through the colonial period and are still developing today.[188] In the new states, kingship therefore evolved between the push and pull of the global and local, the cosmopolitan and the vernacular, the so-called Mughal style and the (re)invention of nativist traditions, to which we turn our attention in the next chapter.[189]

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[186] Cohn, 'Representing'.

[187] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 258–59; Fenech, *Darbar*

[188] Bayly, *Origins*.

[189] In this, various discourses of sovereignty came to the fore, of which Maratha notions of *swarajaya* (self-rule) that drew on local ideas of *zamindari* sovereignty studied by André Wink is but one example: *Land and Sovereignty*, 32–51.

9 Vernacularisation

The period between Timur's invasion and Humayun's second reign has lately been described as India's 'long fifteenth century' and reclaimed by scholars as an important period of study.[1] Rather than an interstitial time when little or nothing happened, Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh regard it as an era of decentralisation and even 'democratisation' in culture and society, as in politics. It was a time when 'arriviste patrons could have genealogies and tales composed; performers could reinvent the epics for a new world; upwardly mobile chieftains could lay claim to languages and forms from which they were previously excluded.'[2] Political turmoil engendered a great deal of peregrination, perhaps even kickstarting the greater mobility of early modern times, whether 'in search of employment or business opportunities, for pilgrimage, war, or pleasure.'[3] This helped spread local or regional languages and their respective genres – including poems, stories, and histories, but also dictionaries, criticism, guidebooks – as well as wider cultural forms or styles, be it in music or painting, for instance, incorporating unmistakably *localist* imagery.

Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit continued to operate as translocal and transregional, 'classical' or 'high' languages, but were also modulated to suit new patrons and purposes, at the same time absorbing yet even competing with vernacular languages. Sustained through the Mughal classical age, this trend found a new impetus as the imperium began to fragment into the new regional kingdoms. Like the long fifteenth century, the 'long eighteenth century' was another period of cultural ferment amidst decentralisation. Likewise, it was similarly dismissed as producing literature and art lacking refinement, making it unworthy of scholarly attention until a radical change in perspective came about only a few decades ago.[4] Those political cycles examined in Chapter 7

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[1] Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 1.

[2] Ibid, 2. On the last, see: Sreenivasan, 'Warrior-Tales at Hinterland Courts'.

[3] Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 2, for citation, and 33–35. Contemporaries were so aware of this mobility that they theorised it or made it a motif in their work; see: de Bruijn and Bush, 'Introduction', 1–4, 7, for examples. See, also: Kapadia, 'Local Kingdoms', especially 234–40.

[4] Compare, for instance, the world described by Sheikh in *Forging* – by which pastoralists and peasants carved out territories for themselves and created courts, in the process shedding

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clearly matter for cultural production and innovation, and vice versa, of which a particular sort concerns us here – namely, literature, visual culture, and performance in the vernacular.

'Vernacularisation' in south Asia began around the beginning of the second millennium, spurred by the desire to replace a larger world and translocalism with new and more local ways of making culture, to paraphrase the work of Sheldon Pollock.[5] It can touch any aspect of cultural production, from language and literature, to the arts and architecture, and inflect broader changes in aesthetics, from dress or fashion to politics (e.g., court rituals and kingly presentation). It should be noted, however, that much as nations are 'imagined communities', so, too, are local forms not so much immanent as invented or 'naturalised'.[6] In some cases, furthermore, early modern vernacularisation was actually a step toward the creation of the 'national' cultures and identities of modern times. A final issue touched upon in this chapter concerns the tension between the local and the universal or between the specific and the standardised engendered by vernacularisation.

Vertical and horizontal standardisation were, Victor Lieberman argues, crucial to the emergence of successively more well-integrated and, consequently, more successful states out of each political cycle (§7.5).[7] Vernacular or localised culture flourished, too, however. How was this so? On the one hand, to take one of Lieberman's examples, the creation of a network of Buddhist monasteries helped 'standardise' culture and secured its spread. On the other hand, Burmese monks often chose to write in vernaculars rather than in Pali as they sought to embed themselves within local society in mainland southeast Asia.[8]

This was part of a much broader phenomenon. Generalising early modern developments in language use in south Asia, but equally true of other aspects of culture in the period, Sumit Guha observes 'a tension between hybridisation tending toward assimilation and distinction tending toward establishing identity.'[9] As relationships were redrawn between local or proto-national versus translocal or cosmopolitan, and between high versus low registers or forms, so standardisation often helped to articulate and eventually to sharpen the specificity of vernacular culture in early modern times, foreshadowing the global-level process identified by C.A. Bayly as an integral part of the birth of the modern world after c. 1780.[10]

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local beliefs in favour of legitimation by larger and more orthodox religious groups – to the processes described in §7.4.

[5] See: Guha, 'Bad Language', 49.

[6] On the process of 'naturalisation' and literary vernacularisation in India, see: Pollock, 'Vernacular Millennium', especially 41–43.

[7] See, especially: Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii.

[8] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 134, and *passim*.

[9] Guha, 'Bad Language', 55.

[10] Bayly, *Birth*, here especially 64–80. For a valuable critique of 'cosmopolitanism', not least as it is formulated here: Strathern and Biedermann, 'Introduction', especially 3–12. See, also: O'Hanlon, 'Cultural Pluralism'.

To grapple with the vernacularisation of language, we must first make sense of two important languages – Sanskrit and Persian. As classical languages, they were variously regionalised, localised, or made 'fresh', especially in the early modern period, as we shall see in the next section. As cosmopolitan languages, they increasingly faced competition from a range of vernaculars as the latter became more sophisticated. Their status and significance was eventually restructured vis-à-vis these more obviously local tongues, or what we can call Indic vernaculars, like Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, and Braj, the development of which is the subject of the second section. The focus of the third section shifts to other ways of making culture: architecture, painting, and music. To get a handle on vernacularisation in these vast fields (itself a limited selection), we must cast our gaze narrowly and examine the development of an imperial or 'high' Mughal style, and its subsequent localisation in the eighteenth-century successor states. Overall, vernacularisation was a long-run process with important early modern phases, even as these had complex causes and unfolded quite differently in different places and across different forms of culture; its long-term impact is the subject of the conclusion.

9.1 The Sanskrit and Persian Cosmopolises

Sanskrit 'denotes (and connotes) the very height of dignity', for it literally means 'perfected'.[11] It was widely venerated as *devabhasha* or *devavani* – the language of the gods – being, after all, the language of Vedic, Tantric, and other texts formative of what we nowadays lump together as Hinduism (§2.1). Pollock calls this formation the 'Sanskrit cosmopolis', within which Sanskrit functioned neither merely as a religious language, nor as a regional language, or even as a pan-Indian language used by the elite for literary and aesthetic production. Sanskrit pervaded politics *and* aesthetics, Pollock argues, not linked to any particular regional identities or polities or aspect of culture and cosmography, so much as extending across them, thereby forming the basis of how people engaged with the world – and articulated their place within it – long before the dawn of the early modern period.[12] Sanskrit is a classical language and was once a cosmopolitan register that served multiple functions. Sometimes it interacted with regional languages, yet also lay 'above' them, whose place was structured in relation to Sanskrit.

Historically, this world of Sanskrit language and learning extended beyond the Indian subcontinent, its contours forming in connexion with the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism and their respective texts and traditions. Inevitably, some of the active and direct links between Indian Sanskrit(ic) specialists and their counterparts abroad had more or less withered by early modern times, in certain cases to be later revived thanks to modern transport and communications technologies.[13] In other cases, Indian Sanskrit(ic) specialists settled into roles in foreign states without fully indigenising, as remains the case in Thailand, where Brahman ritualists forming a distinct group in Thai society continue to perform rites and ceremonies at the royal court and thus continue to perpetuate Indic knowledge.[14] Yet, there were also instances of the renewal of intellectual links. Under the patronage of the Dalai Lamas in the later seventeenth century, for instance, Brahmans expert in five forms of knowledge important to Buddhist intellectuals (i.e., logic, language, medicine, arts and crafts, and that relating to Buddhist contemplative praxis) were invited to Tibet, where they contributed to a burst of new scholarship on these topics, at the same time looping Tibet into the dynamic networks of early modern Indian knowledge production.[15] In Europe, comparably, the renewal of Latin (and Greek, to a lesser extent) was part and parcel with both the intellectual project of Humanism and the Reformation of the Church.[16]

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[11] Busch, 'Anxiety', 118.

[12] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, offers a fuller exposition of Sanskrit's rise from roughly the beginning of the Common Era.

So much for the changing contours of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, but what was happening to Sanskrit on the Indian subcontinent? Provocatively, Pollock has contended that the second millennium witnessed the 'death of Sanskrit' in consequence of the emergence and efflorescence of Indic vernaculars and the rise of a Persian cosmopolis.[17] This view has not gone unchallenged, however. True, Sanskrit came to be used alongside local vernaculars in a single text or inscription – the former for the sacred or poetic parts, the latter for the 'workly' portions outlining key information – where previously Sanskrit alone would have prevailed. True, local vernaculars were steadily becoming more popular (via devotional verse) and, as they developed and were enriched, also more cosmopolitan (i.e., capable of carrying the workly *and* poetic responsibilities of language). Yet, it was not the case that vernaculars entirely displaced Sanskrit, to the extent that vernacularisation contributed to the demise of Sanskrit by the early modern period. Society was changing, and so was Sanskrit; it was hardly fixed in aspic, nor were its users so universally conservative as to shoot down any modification of forms and genres.[18] Sanskrit was itself being regionalised or localised in the second millennium, Yigal Bronner and David Shulman make clear. Vernacularisation thus involved the emergence of Indic vernaculars from local tongues *as well*

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[13] Frost, 'Wider Opportunities', is useful here, for it locates Buddhist/Sanskritic revival within a cosmopolitan sphere that nonetheless serviced a 'nationalist' awakening, which is pertinent to the larger themes and implications of the present chapter.

[14] Alberts, 'Translating', 259. The relationship was not reflexive, for Thai – like Tibetan – did not influence Sanskrit or other Indic languages, let alone enter into usage; see: Kapstein, Indian Literary Identity', especially 747–51.

[15] Schaeffer, 'New Scholarship'.

[16] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 29–40.

[17] See: Pollock, 'Death'.

[18] Ali, 'Sanskrit', on the changing concerns of Sanskrit litterateurs and, resultantly, the new developments in certain genres.

as the regionalisation of Sanskrit, not to mention the interaction of these two processes, examined below.[19]

Still, it might be tempting to see the demise – if not quite the death – of Sanskrit as the outcome of the rise of the Persian cosmopolis in conjunction with the spread of Indo-Muslim power on the subcontinent. As a language, Persian's fortunes had waxed sufficiently by the fifteenth century to make it a classical language in its own right, not to mention a 'language of governance and learning' from the Balkans to Bengal, reaching its zenith as a lingua franca between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries under the aegis of multi-ethnic and multi-religious states, the Mughal Empire being a prime example.[20] As this suggests, Persian was more than just a literary language, so that Persian's spread also carried ideas and ideals communicated in texts written in Persian or through the actions of Persian speakers, some of them Iranian but most from elsewhere, some Muslim but a great proportion of non-Muslims, too. As more people became familiar with Persian, so it became a language-in-common to an even larger and more widespread group, constitutive of what has been called a Persophone or Persianate world (§1.3.1).[21]

A great deal of scholarship has focused on the formation and changing contours of this world, as well as Persian's many uses, with more recent work even questioning the geographical and social frontiers of the Persianate world 'to identify the limits – indeed, the breaking points – of Persian's usefulness as a medium of information, understanding, and affinity.'[22] Ultimately, Persian functioned as Latin did in Europe, creating a pluralistic or cosmopolitan space 'generated by shared knowledge of religiosity, statecraft, diplomacy, trade, sociability, or subjectivity', Nile Green states, 'that was accessed and circulated through the common use of written Persian across interconnected nodal points of Eurasia.'[23] Such was its importance, in fact, that Sunil Sharma coins the term 'lingua persica', forcing us to grapple with the Eurotropism of such terms as 'lingua franca' and the Eurocentricity of comparing Persian to Latin (rather than vice versa).[24]

Precisely because the effects of Persian-usage were so far reaching, some scholars have been inclined to speak of a Persian cosmopolis in counterpart to the Sanskrit or Arabic cosmopolises. Persian language and (material) culture created a broadly encompassing 'aesthetic and literary sensibility' that shaped the intellectual, cultural, and visual environment of places like south Asia for centuries.[25] Circulation – of language, forms, ideas, and people – was vital to the spread and sedimentation of the Persian cosmopolis; the growth of Persian-usage made travel easier, and the high-point of the Persian cosmopolis is concurrent with the uptick in mobility definitive of early modernity. Command of the Persian language may have resulted from birth and residency in Persia or central Asia, but others were aided by the spread of the Persian cosmopolis and the opportunities it afforded individuals or groups across a large terrain. Compelled by Persian's eventual hegemony, many aspirational early moderns sought to become familiar with Persian language and Persianate cultural forms (i.e., architecture, literature, painting, music, dress, deportment, manners, morals). The Persianate sphere extended from the Ottoman domains to the Malay world and Siam, the latter being outside the Islamicate world. This reminds us that, despite much overlap, the Persianate world was not exactly coterminous with the Islamicate or Indo-Islamicate world.[26] In any case, India's pivotal place within early modern Indian Ocean trade networks meant it played an important role in the spread of Persianate literary and cultural forms through to southeast Asia and, hence, of the expanding horizons of the Persian cosmopolis.[27]

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[19] Bronner and Shulman, 'Sanskrit'.

[20] Green, 'Introduction', 1.

[21] Ibid, for a valuable, critical survey of the historiography and such concepts as 'Persianate' and 'Persophone', as well as a rich historical overview of Persian's rise.

[22] Ibid, 1, for citation, and the volume from which it is drawn as a representative study of the latter endeavour.

[23] Ibid, 10.

[24] Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 1.

[25] Eaton, 'Persian Cosmopolis', here 63. Ricci, in *Islam Translated*, proposes an early modern 'Arabic cosmopolis' as a space constituted by the circulation and translation of Arabic-Islamic

Returning to pre-modern India, were the Sanskrit and Persian cosmopolises incompatible or even mutually exclusive? In short: no. In the first place, there were overlaps and similarities in intellectual production across the divide; Richard M. Eaton and Philip B. Wagoner give the examples of ethical-legal treatises and historical works focusing on the lives of sovereigns being common in both the Sanskrit and Persian cosmopolises at the start of our period.[28] Persian might have been an alien tongue, but Persianate intellectuals were asking similar questions or producing commensurable answers to particular problems, therefore, as material in Chapter 10 makes clear. There is also evidence of the fusion of certain aspects of the Persian cosmopolis with the Sanskrit, as in Vijayanagara, as well as the absorption of ideas from Sanskrit political and cosmological wisdom into the Persianate tradition, as in Bijapur and Golkonda.[29]

The Mughals – from Akbar's reign – likewise sought to translate Sanskrit works into Persian (§3.3.3). This enterprise drew on wide-ranging networks of Sanskrit experts: Jains, mostly from Gujarat, and Brahmans, who hailed from across north India and as far south as the Deccan.[30] They read a version of the Sanskrit text, uttering it aloud in the common language of north India,

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texts into vernaculars (e.g., Tamil, Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, Buginese). See, also: Bahl, 'Transoceanic Arabic Historiography', which looks at the Indian Ocean-centred Arabic cosmopolis from an Indian standpoint.

[26] Eaton, 'Persian Cosmopolis', 83, where it is also noted that the Sanskrit cosmopolis was also more 'elite' and thus less wide-reaching than the Persian.

[27] See: Subrahmanyam, *Tagus to the Ganges*, 45–79.

[28] Eaton and Wagoner, *Contested Sites*, 26.

[29] Ibid, 31.

[30] Truschke, *Culture*, 28, and 45–54 for comparison of their changing fortunes, with Jains losing favour from Jahangir's reign while Brahmans maintained an important role through the seventeenth century.

Hindavi, which was heard by Persianate litterateurs, such as Abdul Qadir Badauni (1540–1605), who authored the finished work in Persian.[31] Involving collaboration and a chain of translation and translators, the final output could hardly be a literal translation, to say nothing of how certain ideas or themes were reworked to fit the Indo-Persianate, Indo-Islamicate context, which is itself significant. Thinking of the worlds of Sanskrit and Persian as mutually exclusive hence ignores their encounter, how each was changed in consequence, and how something new was synthesised into being.

Synthesis and hybridity were not the only outcomes of the Sanskrit-Persian encounter. Indo-Muslim rulers also employed Sanskrit litterateurs to compose entirely new works in established Indic genres. The ruler of mid-fifteenth-century Kashmir, for instance, sought to commemorate the region's first gunpowder cannons by commissioning his court poet, Srivara, to compose a Sanskrit praise poem (*prashasti*).[32] This was no lifeline thrown to a class desperate for patronage; Sanskrit retained its prestige and importance, and herein lay the Kashmir sultan's motivation. Brahman and Jain specialists penned panegyrics in honour of Sultanate or Mughal dynasts, either having been summoned to do so by local rulers (imperial vassals) anxious for appeasement, or else of their own accord, in pursuit of the fruits of imperial favour.[33] Imperial service helped sustain many of these specialists and other members of their households (§10.3), so that the elaboration of those Indo-Muslim bureaucracies responsible for the entrenchment of the Persian cosmopolis was also vitally linked to the sustenance of Sanskrit intellectual life. How was this so?

Persianisation in south Asia began under the aegis of the Delhi sultans. This fact has often been taken for granted, but we ought consciously consider the rationale and conditions under which this language – rather than, say, Turkish or Hindavi – was given primacy. Turkish was somewhat on the ascendant in the fifteenth century and was the mother tongue of the first Mughal emperor, Babur. Turkish was replaced at court by Persian, however, for the political conditions of the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries made Persian(ate) writers a powerful resource in the hands of arriviste princes.[34] By 1582, when Persian was made the official language of the Mughal state, Akbar was taking greater interest in Indic cultures and began patronising literary production in north Indian languages, raising the question of why he continued to favour Persian (over Hindavi). Part of the reason was linked to the migration of Persian specialists or knowledgeable experts and associated changes in education (§10.1). Persian was the tongue of an elite cadre within the bureaucracy, therefore, but also had the advantage – for Muslims – of being one of the languages of Islam, while 'for educated non-Muslims, it represented a language with minimal sectarian implications.'[35] Persian was additionally relatively stable, whereas Hindavi varied greatly across space, such that the former was preferable for record-keeping. The variation in Hindavi was partly lexical and dialectical, for Hindavi or Hindi was – at the start of our period – an umbrella term in Persian sources for what would be called Braj Bhasha, Awadhi or Avadhi, Bhojpuri, and Khari Boli once each of these became fully fledged vernaculars.[36] To this can be added Hindavi's various renderings in different scripts, including the Arabo-Persian; *kaithi*, used by Kayasthas and deriving its name from its connection with this scribal community; and *devanagari*, which had long been used for writing Sanskrit.

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[31] To this may be added the choice of particular versions of the Sanskrit epic that accorded best with Indo-Persianate literary interests, the addition of Persian poetry, and so forth: Truschke, *Culture*, 104–11.

[32] Obrock, 'Situating Sanskrit', 3; Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 116.

[33] Prakash, 'Rudra Kavi'; Vose, 'Jain Memory'; Truschke, 'Setting the Record Wrong'.

[34] Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, especially 139–70, provides valuable analysis of this development.

Persian-language usage then percolated by stages from court centres to local society via a bureaucratic machinery whose operative language was Persian. This bureaucracy made use of paper and pen (*kaghaz* and *qalam*) – the former a technology associated with Islamicate culture, and readily taken up in south Asia, as elsewhere.[37] The intellectual, political, and cultural significance of paper was such, for instance, that it was readily and very consciously adopted in the Malay world following the advent of Islamisation (§3.1.1), which is all the more significant given that paper had to be imported from India, China, or Europe.[38] As the state expanded and its bureaucratic reach deepened in south Asia, so usage of paper *and* of Persian widened. The result was not Sanskrit becoming a 'dead language' known only to a limited elite or in liturgy, for the ruling elite's interest in Sanskrit and regional languages intensified, rather than weakened. Sanskrit specialists meanwhile obtained a new prestige and material comfort – yet also a set of thorny ideological problems arising from their service to a ritually 'unclean' master – through their connection to royalty that ultimately gave a new lease of life to their intellectual production.[39] The adoption of paper in place of palm leaf, ivory, and other materials, moreover, is said to have 'promoted a boom in Sanskrit manuscript culture' as much as 'the further development of vernacular languages for literary as well as mundane administrative and legal purposes' at the lower administrative reaches of states.[40]

Although hardly a new language on the Indian scene at the dawn of the early modern period, the scope and extent of Persian usage greatly enlarged and deepened from about the sixteenth century.[41] Persian was not only a Eurasian lingua franca; a simplified form was widely spoken in south Asia. The Sikh gurus were among this community of speakers, whereas the fact of certain

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[35] Asher and Talbot, *India*, 164. On the last point, see: Pellò, 'Persian'.

[36] Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 15.

[37] Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 136–37.

[38] Gallop, 'Malay Manuscript Art', 167.

[39] Truschke, *Culture,* 3–4, 7–10, 15; Guha, 'Serving the Barbarian'.

[40] Minkowsi *et al*, 'Social History', 3

[41] Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, 139–70.

Pastho-speaking Afghan *amirs'* poor command of Persian being commented upon by contemporaries underscores its important – and growing – use in oral communication from the very start of our period.[42] At the same time, much like Sanskrit, it was evolving and thus changing in character and complexity: Persian did not merely influence the evolution of regional languages, but underwent a process of what can be called its becoming vernacularised, indigenised, or provincialised. To grasp this, we might conceive of the Persian cosmopolis not as a homogenous entity, but rather – as Stefano Pellò urges – as a vast 'fragmented, polycentric space, in which the cosmopolitan was continuously (re-)localised and vice versa.'[43] Thus, for instance, Persian scholarship in the fifteenth-century regional sultanates started to take account of local material, facilitating Persian's provincialisation.[44]

Some were unwelcoming of this acculturation of the language to its local context, their quarrel with the 'moderns' sharing something with those disputes erupting in early modern Europe as new national-vernaculars were gaining prominence. Critics (the 'ancients') derided it as a degenerate 'Indian style' (*sabk-i hindi*), though this term was only used by later generations. Others, like Akbar, strived for its purification via the preparation of a lexicon devoid of non-Persian words and expressions, to take one example of a trend.[45] Others still, however, embraced change and the opportunities afforded by hybridity and the drift from classical Persian lexicon and literary forms.[46] Poetry acquired a freshness – what contemporaries celebrated as 'fresh speak' (*taza-gu'i*).[47] In this, Indo-Persian users were not alone, for their counterparts in Iran were also striving to add freshness (*tazagi*) to literary language and were as appreciative of Indian savants as Ottoman Turkish writers likewise seeking inspiration and novelty. Faizi, Sa'ib, Bidil and other avant-garde Indo-Persian writers who broke free from classical norms (viz., diction but also 'rhymes, metres, prosody, and conventional poetic tropology') from the late sixteenth century were thus part of a transregional domain for a new kind of Persian, as Rajiv Kinra so valuably brings to our attention.[48] Finally, if the spread of the Persian cosmopolis impacted Sanskrit literary and intellectual production in numerous ways, we might also pause to conceive, Audrey Truschke proposes, how Indo-Muslims' engagement with Sanskrit gave shape to the *taza-gu'i*.[49]

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[42] Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 8, 14.

[43] Pellò, 'Local Lexis', 167–68, for citation. See, also: 'Pellò, 'Persian', especially 37–42.

[44] See, also: Karomat, 'Turki and Hindavi'.

[45] Alam, 'Pursuit', 336, for citation, and 341.

[46] Dudney, in 'Sabk-e Hendi', argues that criticism revolved not around the 'indigenisation' of Persian *per se*, but a 'crisis of authority' resulting from contemporaries lacking the tools with which to judge the merits of innovative works that departed from the classical cannon. On the long gestation of *sabk-i Hindi*, see: Alam, 'Persian in Precolonial Hindustan'.

[47] Alam, 'Pursuit', 338–40.

[48] Kinra, 'Fresh Words'. See, also: Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*, 16–62.

[49] Truschke, *Culture,* 204, and *passim*.

All this suggests that Sanskrit and Persian were neither set in stone and unchanging, nor was the former displaced by the latter, for we find numerous 'Sanskrit interlopers in a Persian age'.[50] Rather, both were vitally transformed through their encounter, especially in the early modern period. Another implication of this discussion concerns vernacularisation, for localised or regionalised variants of Sanskrit and Persian were coming into being. The relationship of Sanskrit and Persian to vernacularisation was more complex still, however. These classical languages not only provided the scripts and orthographic stability required by local tongues as the latter took their place in the world, but also faced competition as Indic vernaculars became more cosmopolitan, as we shall see in what follows.

9.2 Language and Literary Culture in the Vernacular

Often, but not always, Indic vernaculars emerged via the rendering of languages *spoken* in the region or locality into *textual* ones ('literisation'), before using them to communicate ideas – artistic and literary, historical, religious, and political, or scientific – in inscriptions and texts.[51] To do so, vernaculars often had to supplement or supplant what had become 'the transethnic, transregional, and (according to its own self-understanding) transhistorical language' of much of India and the eastern Indian Ocean world by the middle of the first millennium – namely, Sanskrit. This renegotiation of the status and significance of Indic vernaculars vis-à-vis Sanskrit unfolded from the second millennium.

Sanskrit was a cosmopolitan register and thus lay above vernacular languages. The latter were literised via Sanskrit (i.e., its script, grammar, orthography, etc), and were used in a restricted way at first, generally at the lower levels of administration (e.g., to record land grants).[52] Yet, as Pollock shows, cosmopolitan literariness gradually became localised, while vernacular literary production also became 'a central concern to royal courts.'[53] The result was to expand the scope of vernacular language usage, steadily elevating vernaculars to the higher register of, say, political or literary communication. Take, as an example, Kannada. It was literised in the fifth century but subordinated to Sanskrit until about the eighth century, whereafter its use very gradually spread from the documentary portion of inscriptions, for which a lower register was deemed amply suitable, to the dynastic portions as well as eulogies, previously expressed in the higher register of Sanskrit; this had taken place by the thirteenth century. Kannada seems to have been used as a literary language in the ninth century in a limited way, but then developed under courtly patronage as it absorbed or localised the universalism of Sanskrit and served as a way of expressing local identity; much the same can be said of Tamil.[54] Similar processes were afoot elsewhere in the Sanskrit world around this time, such as ninth- to eleventh-century Java and Sri Lanka, fourteenth-century Siam, and fifteenth-century Vietnam.[55]

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[50] Obrock, 'Situating Sanskrit', 4.

[51] That said, some so-called vernaculars, like Kannada, might already have operated fairly trans-regionally prior to their development in the ways described in what follows. Thus, we should be cautious about the shorthand of vernaculars as local/regional, which is really a *relative* statement arising from comparison of such languages (at particular points in time) to a language like Sanskrit or Arabic or Persian or Latin. See, here: Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan Vernaculars', 7–8.

[52] Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan Vernaculars', 10–11.

[53] Pollock, 'Vernacular Millennium', 49.

9.2.1 The Dynamics of Literary Vernacularisation

As in later medieval Europe, literary vernacularisation probably proceeded by distinct and definable stages, rather than seamlessly over several centuries without impediment.[56] Marathi is a good example. Attested from at least the eighth century as a language, Marathi experienced a florescence coinciding with the rise of the Yadava dynasty at the end of the twelfth century, not leading to its displacing Sanskrit but certainly helping it to become a 'noble' tongue.[57] A second stage was well underway by the seventeenth century, thanks to mobile groups like soldiers and administrators who used their mother tongue – Marathi – long after dispersing across the Deccan.[58] It thus became a language of a trans-regional elite, serving as an administrative register by at least the early sixteenth century, and was patronised by the Deccan sultans and their Mughal rivals.[59] In time, it also became a language of historiographical production, as demonstrated by the major history of the first ruler of the new Maratha state, the *Sabhasad Bakhar* (c. 1696-97), and thus as the language of the Maratha *swarajya*.[60]

As this case study suggests, there were important variations in the character and dynamics of vernacularisation in south Asia, both over time and across space. It began earlier in the south and under distinct circumstances. Some impetus came from the spread of Bhakti and Sant movements, which were often highly regionalised, their leaders often striving to speak not to elite Brahmans so much as ordinary folk (§2.1.1; §2.4.1), much as Tyndale's translation of the New Testament radically used an English that was 'lively and idiomatic' by virtue of mirroring 'the familiar patterns and cadences of English as it was spoken by his contemporaries.'[61] Although capable of transcending the many tongues that divided India, Sanskrit was a high register, and one associated with Brahmans; hence, it was eschewed in favour of regional vernaculars by Bhakti poets. Bhakti movements – and the poems penned by their leaders and sung by their followers – were critical to the defining and distinguishing of India's regional vernaculars (e.g., Marathi, Kannada) from the medieval era onwards.[62]

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[54] Ibid, 49–52; Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan Vernaculars', 19–28, for more detailed analysis.

[55] Pollock, 'Vernacular Millennium', 47–48, 52–53.

[56] For a cursory comparison of European and Indian developments: ibid, 61–65.

[57] Guha, 'Bad Language', 52.

[58] Ibid, 50.

[59] Ibid, 53.

[60] Ibid, 50–51. For more on the relationship of Sanskrit to Marathi, see, recently: Gomez, 'Sanskrit'.

[61] *C.f.* Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan Vernaculars', 29–31, where it is argued that the emphasis placed on religious developments as a motor of vernacularisation derives from scholars working in such fields as religious studies and thus not taking into account literary production at large. That

As Bhakti continued to spread geographically and grow in influence, so this development entered a new phase in the early modern period. Take, for instance, Tukaram (b. 1608). Born in the western Deccan into a non-Brahman mercantile caste, he was denied a Sanskrit-language education available only to Brahmans, and yet was not illiterate, as his compositions in Marathi stand to demonstrate. He was a devotee of Vithoba, an incarnation of Vishnu popular among adherents of Varkari devotionalism, a form of Bhakti that held sway among non-Brahmans in the region. His verse spoke of reform of the social order, respecting Brahmans yet empowering non-Brahmans by espousing the irrelevance of caste to the attainment of spiritual goals. His cult status and the popularity of his verse vitalised and was imbricated within longer-term developments: the Varkari pilgrimage tradition, bureaucratic and judicial networks 'that brought Marathi-speakers in increasing touch with one another,' and the rise of vernacular poetry. These, in turn, gave rise to the creation of a new state – one uniting non-Brahman, Marathi-speakers as 'Marathas'.[63]

By contrast, vernacularisation was spurred – perhaps even inaugurated – by Muslim intellectuals in the Indo-Muslim kingdoms of the north, such as the Delhi Sultanates, from Mas'ud Sa'd Salman's contribution to the development of Hindavi in early twelfth-century Lahore to Maulana Daiud's role in the history of Avadhi in Jaunpur at the end of the fourteenth century.[64] Let us focus on Chishti Sufis, who began composing *prema-kahanis* or *pem-kathas* (lit., 'love stories') from the fourteenth century onwards. These works had a hero, who was a yogi and who attained his divine heroine – always portrayed as a beautiful Indian woman – 'after an arduous ascetic quest', thereafter bringing 'her to live with a hostile wife who represents the world.'[65] Thus, such works drew on 'the local language of ascetic practice', and equated 'human love and love for a divine being.'[66] As literary productions, they soon became fairly formulaic, but the genre was itself an innovation of the period. It expressed Sufi messages through lyrics (*ghazals*) and narrative (*masnavi*), both deriving from Persianate tradition, and also drew on Sanskrit aesthetic treatises concerning the *rasas* (lit. 'juice', and more broadly the flavour or essence of an artistic

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may be, but it does not discount the role of religious actors of various confessions: Hawley, *Storm*, 312. Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 131, for citation.

[62] Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 7–8.

[63] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 154, for citation, and 129–54, for examination of Tukaram's life, context, and impact.

[64] Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan Vernaculars', 29. See, also: Busch, 'Brajbhasha Poets', 273.

[65] Behl, 'Hindavi Sufi Romance', 180, for citations.

[66] Ibid, 180.

work), as well as the literary conventions of the region, discovered via poetic recitations and performances of music and dance.[67]

A work by Qutban of c. 1503, the *Mirigavati*, is the second surviving example of this genre, probably penned at the court of the Jaunpur sultan.[68] More broadly, these works were written and performed in Delhi, Jaunpur, and Bihar, and hence written in Avadhi (or eastern Hindavi), thus developing it as a literary language.[69] To the west, local Sufi *shaikhs* produced these and other works in Sindhi, likewise spurring its development as a literary language.[70] Vernacularisation and the displacement of Sanskrit took off in non-Muslim courts in the north not long after this process had begun, so that Gujarati was used as a literary vernacular from the twelfth century, Assamese from the late fourteenth, and Oriya and Malayalam from the fifteenth century – this last occurring around the same time Braj was adopted as a language of state by the Tomar dynasty of Gwalior.[71] If the political transitions after Timur's departure from India gave a major impetus to vernacularisation, another would come in the wake of Mughal decentralisation.

9.2.2 Vernaculars as Elite Interlopers: Dakhni

Vernaculars might be regional, the written form of common local tongues (*deshabhasha*), but things were not always so straightforward, the Gurmukhi script and Gujarati and Dakhni languages being cases in point. Gujarati might readily be described as the language of Gujarat, but this belies the subsumption of a range of key subregional dialects – 'ranging from Surati in the south to Kacchi (Cutchy) in the west' – under the umbrella of Gujarati, not to mention the language's relation to the cosmopolitan languages of Sanskrit and Persian, at one level, and to 'the speech forms of nomadic pastoral peoples such as the Bhil or other kinds of communities' like the 'Parsi, Bohra, Khoja, Kathi, Caran, and Dubala', who ranged more widely than the confines of premodern or present-day Gujarat, at another.[72] Gujarati, therefore, is today a regional language that evolved from many transregional ones.[73] Gurmukhi (lit. 'from the guru's mouth') evolved from the business shorthand known as Landa or Mahajani used by Guru Nanak during the years of his training for a mercantile career typical for a male of his caste.[74] Nanak's verses were in Punjabi but were penned in the *Adi Granth* in the Gurmukhi script, even as they drew extensively upon diction and poetic expression from dialects and local languages as well as sacred registers, including: Khari Boli/Hindavi, Saraiki (the language of southern Punjab), Persian (as both a lingua franca and a literary language), Braj, as well as Arabic and Sanskrit (in which the Quran and the Vedas, respectively, are written).[75] Being a new script for writing Nanak's revelation derived from that of a north Indian mercantile vernacular, and used for religious and liturgical texts, Gurmukhi now occupies a status on par with Arabic or Sanskrit. By contrast, Dakhni was penned in the *existing* Perso-Arabic script (like Urdu/Rektah, in the north). Used largely by urbanised elites in the south before striking roots among the local Muslim population, its origins lay in the common tongue of the lands their predecessors had left behind in the north during Tughluq times.[76]

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[67] Ibid, 181.

[68] Ibid, 184, and *passim*, for analysis.

[69] Sufi interest in Hindavi poetry and lyrics persisted and deepened; see: Orsini, 'Krishna is the Truth of Man'.

[70] Asani, 'Sindhi Literary Culture', here especially 616–20 and 629–37, and also 626–29, on the relation of the vernacular to the cosmopolitan (Persian).

[71] Pollock, 'Vernacular Millennium', 53–54.

[72] Yashachandra, 'Gujarati Literary Culture', 569.

[73] Ibid, for a rich and incisive analysis.

[74] Asani, 'Sindhi Literary Culture', 622–24.

Hindavi (aka. Hindvi, Hindustani, Hindui, Hindi), the common language of north India, grew dialectical offshoots like Khari Boli and Avadhi and developed in Persianised form as Dakhni and Urdu (aka. Rektah before c. 1800).[77] Persian classical models and texts exerted a great influence on the development of the Dakhni cannon in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Deccani courts, for many Persian works were translated into the vernacular, although the ties loosened as Dakhni came into its own.[78] Besides its relation to Hindavi and Persian, Dakhni also contained a considerable Punjabi vocabulary. Being associated with migrants from Punjab and Hindustan from the time of the Delhi Sultanates and thus widely known as 'Hindvi' at first, authors had begun to refer to Dakhni as Dakhni by the seventeenth century – 'a term reflecting the new point of geographical reference, and the new spirit of cultural independence, of the language's native speakers – the Deccani class.'[79] Indeed, though speakers of Urdu 'only overcame the literary tyranny of Persian and began composing in their own vernacular' in the eighteenth century, 'such inhibitions did not obtain among Deccani Muslims, who had become much more estranged from Persian culture' than their north Indian counterparts.[80]

Dakhni flourished in the Deccan Sultanates, although the Deccani courts varied in the nature and extent of their patronage of vernaculars. Thus, the westerly Nizam Shahi court seems not to have encouraged any, while Bijapur – in the central plateau – patronised Dakhni literature but not that in Kanada or Marathi, whereas the Qutb Shahi rulers in the eastern Deccan were so prolific in their support of Telugu literature that one authority was moved to note that they 'virtually became Telugu Sultans.'[81] Royal support for Dakhni took two forms. The first and more widespread was the patronage of poets like Nusrati Bijapuri (d. 1674) by the sultan and his courtiers, the result of which was literature produced for aesthetic pleasure. The second, and more remarkable, was via the authorship of Dakhni-language works by the sultans themselves, of which Ibrahim ʿAdil Shah II's *Kitab al-Nauras* – an essay on Indic aesthetics set to musical *ragas* (§9.3.3) – is the most outstanding example.[82]

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[75] Singh, *First Sikh*, 4. Asani, 'Devotional Songs', fruitfully compares Khoja Ismaili and Sikh hymns (the former known as *ginans*) and their transmission – not in a register like Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian, but – in Khojaki and Gurmukhi, respectively.

[76] Fischel, *Local States*, 2–3.

[77] On the history of Urdu as a language and label/concept, and its relationship to Hindi: Faruqi, 'Long History'.

[78] See: Sharma, 'Forging'.

[79] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 143.

[80] Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 139.

Religious institutions – not least Sufi *dargahs* – provided another locus for Dakhni literary production, which tended to be on devotional subjects. On the one hand, it was written in the Perso-Arabic script, reaching fewer people than Maratha or Kannada. On the other, it 'came easier' than the high or elite register of Persian, a fact remarked by contemporaries; this engendered for Dakhni a fairly large sphere of influence.[83] Much as Sufi literary production contributed to the development of Avadhi in the north, therefore, so *shaikhs* in the south who wrote in Dakhni supported its growing influence. The Chishti Sufis of Bijapur, for instance, composed songs in Dakhni of the sort typically sung by village women: *chakki-namas*, *charka-namas*, *shadi-namas*, and *suhagan-namas* (i.e., songs sung while grinding meal or spinning thread, at weddings, or by brides), as well as *lori-namas* (lullabies) and *suhailas* (eulogies). These conveyed ideas about love and devotion to God and, in simplified forms or via analogy, more complex Sufi theological ideas, too.[84] The place of particular languages in the Deccan prior to the Mughal conquest can be neatly summarised thanks to work by Richard Eaton: state authority was communicated on coins and inscriptions in Arabic and Persian; court literati wrote texts in Telugu, Dakhni, and Persian; the documentation produced by revenue and judicial administrators was penned in Telugu, Marathi, Kannada, and Persian; while Maratha and Dakhni (and probably other vernaculars, too) were the tongues of popular devotional songs, stories, and texts by *bhaktas* and *shaikhs*.[85]

Persian, it should be noted, did not disappear because of the rise of Dakhni in the pre-Mughal era. Following the Mughal conquest, however, Dakhni was by and large replaced by Urdu. Following the Maratha conquest of swathes of the Deccan, in turn, sponsorship of other local languages resumed (Marathi and Telugu, for instance).[86]

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[81] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 142, for details and the original citation.

[82] Ibid, 144.

[83] Ibid, 143; Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 141.

[84] Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 157–64. A useful summary of other gendered or gender-related aspects of Sufism are described in: Chenoy, 'Shahjahanabad', 169.

[85] Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, 142.

[86] On Dakhni and Marathi interactions and competition, see: Guha, 'Transitions and Translations'.

9.2.3 Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Languages: Interactions

Viewed from the perspective of specialists of prestige or classical languages (e.g., Sanskrit), vernaculars were corrupted registers almost by definition, worthy only of low status and seldom meriting their own names (often simply called *bhasha* or language).[87] This might have held in the early Middle Ages, but the situation had vastly changed by the late medieval – and certainly by the early modern – period. This development resulted from the translation and transcreation of Sanskrit texts (e.g., the *puranas*, or epics such as the *Mahabharata*), not only in India but also further afield, as in Java.[88] Treatises on astrology, aesthetics, or the erotic arts – formerly penned only in Sanskrit – also made their appearance in the vernacular, as did new literary works in vernaculars based on Sanskrit exemplars, structures, or forms (e.g., *ritigranths*). 'In many fields in north India,' Imre Banghe observes, therefore, 'the achievements of Sanskrit were being vernacularised.'[89] In terms of manuscript production, this process seems to have accelerated after c. 1600 – or, to put it differently, there are relatively few manuscripts in Hindi prior to this period, compared to the great numbers in Persian, Arabic, or Sanskrit, but also to the later abundance of Hindi manuscripts.[90]

Vernaculars, as Sumit Guha notes, often had origins in the languages of the populi, yet could also serve as a register of esoteric or secret knowledge within an elite community (especially when enciphered). Sanskrit was, by contrast, a high or prestige register utilised by specialists, yet also functioned as a universal language, cutting across cultural-regional divides much like Latin, Arabic, or Persian.[91] As vernaculars developed, so the boundaries between vernacular and cosmopolitan languages were eroded somewhat, or else became even fuzzier than on Guha's stylised presentation of their differences, in ways and with implications that give us pause. A good starting point is to examine vernaculars like Braj. As one of the major dialects of Hindi, its experience is important within its own right, but it also exemplifies wider trends. The development of *riti* literature (i.e., high-style or according to classical method) in Braj from the late sixteenth century, for instance, was characteristic of the vernacular becoming cosmopolitan.

Braj or Brajbhasha literally means 'language of Braj', linking the language to a particular area of north India celebrated as the centre of Krishna lore through the compositions of Bhakti poets like Mira Bai. Kabir and the Sants also composed in Braj, as did many of the early Sikh writers. The *Dasam Granth* may have been written in the Gurmukhi script and its author might have been addressing a primarily Sikh audience (§2.4.4), but one of its languages was

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[87] Busch, 'Anxiety', 118.

[88] Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan Vernaculars', 28–29.

[89] Bangha, 'Writing Devotion', 140.

[90] Ibid, 140–41 and *passim*.

[91] Guha, 'Bad Language', 50.

Braj, to the extent that it is probably the biggest single work in Braj.[92] This was far from the only Sikh text that made use of Braj, as forthcoming work by Julie Vig endeavours to show. The choice of Braj over other languages was guided by the audience, for it was a widely used dialect, even as it developed higher/elite or courtly and lower/common registers. Those devotional poets who composed in Braj have been praised for spurring a larger process of vernacularisation that has, in turn, been painted as tantamount to 'liberation' from Sanskrit and part of a process by which 'the homely dialects of everyday people fought for representation in the literary field.'[93] For very similar reasons, those Muslims known as Ismailis – found spread across Punjab, Sindh, and Gujarat – adopted a vernacular known as Khojki.[94]

The popularity of Braj and its choice by such a range of writers was also linked to the language's changing status. 'In vernacular literary circles' around the later sixteenth century, Allison Busch noted, 'the dialect of Brajbhasha began to supersede that of Avadhi.'[95] It thus became the form of Hindi/Hindavi with which the Mughals were most familiar as they naturalised to the Indian context, a familiarity reinforced by their imperial officers' interest in Vaishnava communities in and around the capital at Agra, which was not far from the Braj cultural centres of Vrindavan and Mathura.[96] Akbar and Jahangir thus patronised Braj, which developed as a courtly language, and this support continued during the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, thanks to both the emperors and imperial princes.[97]

No longer merely a representation of either a common tongue or of devotional verse, Braj steadily came into use as a cosmopolitan or transregional language, challenging Sanskrit's long-held monopoly in this regard within the Indic domain. It consequently functioned alongside Sanskrit – not merely below it, and sometimes even in place of it – a prestige of which contemporaries were aware. In fact, its relation to Sanskrit had been thoroughly renegotiated and Braj writers were no longer 'dismissed as inarguably inferior to their Sanskrit counterparts', but actually sought after, some achieving spectacular recognition.[98] Braj was more than a local language, for Braj savants were patronised in the Mughal and Rajput kingdoms and as far afield as Punjab, the Deccan, and the Maratha courts, not to mention across confessional communities, as we have seen.[99] By the end of our period, the ruler of Kutch had founded the Bhuj Brajbhasha Pathshala (Braj Language School in Bhuj), which remains preeminent as a centre for Braj learning and archive of Braj works.[100]

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[92] Rinehart, *Dasam Granth*, 12–13, 16. This fact has largely been overlooked, Rinehart argues, because Braj scholars have focussed on texts in the Devanagari script, whereas scholars conversant in Punjabi and Gurmukhi have largely focussed on elements related to Sikhism rather than to language. This lacuna is addressed in forthcoming work by Julie Vig, which examines the use of Braj in a wide number of early modern Sikh works, including *gurbilas* (lit. 'pastimes of the guru').

[93] Busch, 'Anxiety', 122, which is her paraphrase of widespread interpretations of Braj-language *bhakti* compositions (as opposed to those in the elite register, described below).

[94] Further details, and other parallels between Khojki and Gurmukhi, can be found in: Eaton, *Islamic Traditions*, 298–303.

[95] Busch, 'Brajbhasha Poets', 273.

[96] Ibid, 273–74.

[97] Ibid, 277–300. A fuller treatment of this subject can be found in: Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 130–65.

[98] Busch, 'Anxiety', 118.

This geographic expansion was predicated on the expansion of Braj's expressive potential, indicative of which is the genre of Braj *ritigranths* studied by Allison Busch. These works straddled two different genres. On the one hand, there was the traditional system of literary science (*alankarashastra*), long dominated by Sanskrit intellectuals; hence, Braj *ritigranths* closely follow Sanskrit exemplars in their content and the style of classification of literary works. On the other hand, they are collections of poetry; hence, definitions of topics of Sanskrit poetics are followed by verses – in Braj – exemplifying variations on those topics.[101] The hundreds of Braj *ritigranths* produced in the last two pre-colonial centuries formed 'a fertile site for the development of a new form of vernacular poetics and poetry' as their respective authors 'undertook the wholesale systematisation of both vernacular poetics and poetry'.[102] Their readers included Indo-Muslims fluent in Persian but not Sanskrit who, therefore, were finally able to enter a world previously off limits to them. They could consume such works as a means of education but they could also – if they aspired to becoming poets – try and compose their own *ritigranth* as a means of deepening their knowledge and appreciation.[103] As for the patrons of the *riti* poets, finally, their motives might be both intellectual *and* aesthetic, as was the case at Rajput courts.

The *riti* poets flourished under courtly patronage and used a relatively high vernacular register, unlike the simple naturalism of Bhakti bards, while the very contents and concerns of the *ritigranth* genre were derived from the elite world of Sanskrit literature.[104] Yet, none of this automatically means that their works were stiff, mannerist, or stuck in the past. Such a view fails to recognise how much 'Braj writers relished the new literary possibilities of vernacular poetry' as they 'began to encroach upon some of the intellectual terrain that had earlier been inhabited exclusively by Sanskrit writers.'[105] They might have disguised this at times, purporting Sanskrit's primacy over vernaculars, yet the texts often speak for themselves. Hence, for example, the *Radhamadhavavilasacampu* ('Love-Play of Radha and Krishna') by the seventeenth-century Maharashtrian, Jayarama Pindye. Though he composed ten of the eleven cantos in Sanskrit and alleged that verses in *deshabhashas* had no place amidst Sanskrit, for the maintenance of linguistic hierarchies supposedly mattered, the final chapter containing the vernacular verses is the longest, most playful, and innovative. Hyper-conventionalised Sanskrit forms – found in the previous ten chapters – are largely abandoned and the poet's originality finally shines through, as Busch demonstrated.[106]

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[99] Ibid, 119.

[100] See: Mallison, 'Teaching of Braj'. See, also: Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 166–201, for a rich examination of Rajput patronage of Braj *riti* literature.

[101] Busch, 'Anxiety', 115.

[102] Ibid, citations 115, 117.

[103] Ibid, 133.

[104] Ibid, 123. For a broader survey, see: Busch, 'Poetry in Motion'.

[105] Busch, 'Anxiety', 117.

Historians of Hindi describe the period 1650 to 1850 as *ritikal* or period of method or high-style – neoclassicism, in other words – so central were *ritigranths* (books of method) at this time. Here, then, we find a point of connection with linguistic developments elsewhere. For, as Busch observed: 'Romance languages developed both out of opposition to and in imitation of Latin'. Early modern French, to take one example, was 'both a simple language of common speak and a *vulgaire illustre*, a highly refined literary language', the latter achieved by 'appropriating the very features that made Latin elevated' and thereby imparting French 'with dignity, with majesty, with reason.'[107] The comparison is valuable when one considers how the *riti* poets and scholars such as Keshavdas (fl. 1600) and those who followed him have long been sidelined for being decadent and overly mannered or unnaturalistic, whereas European neoclassical writers (e.g., the English poet, John Milton, 1608–74) hold an important place in their respective literary cannons.[108]

What other conclusions may be drawn from this survey? Having originated in the Middle Ages in many cases (Dakhni and Braj standing as notable exceptions), Indic vernaculars continued to develop through the early modern period, yet often in bursts rather than an even or sustained manner. One factor influencing the spread of literised vernaculars was where and how they were employed in the first instances. 'It makes a great deal of difference', Eaton observes, whether a text is 'a stone inscription rich in factual information, an expository treatise read by a tiny circle of courtly elites, or a religious tract intended for wide consumption.'[109] Each of these has a different velocity of circulation – 'that is, the number of hands through which it passes' – which both indicates the existence of, and can help shape, a 'self-aware, integrated speech community.'[110]

Paper did not *necessarily* have a greater velocity of circulation and reach than, say, stone inscriptions; rarely handled illumined and illustrated manuscripts probably had a lesser impact than a text chiselled in large letters into the monumental gateway to a busy marketplace or mosque.[111] Paper *documentation*, however, was a crucial vehicle for the spread of Persian, as we have seen. But revenue records were only one type; another were judicial records, such as *mahzars* (§7.3.3), which were often bilingual and hence attested to the existence of – but also cemented the place of – vernacular language communities, like Marathi.[112] Eaton has gone so far as to suggest vernacularisation was a gradual process, starting with the naming of a particular vernacular and its first use by the state 'to record some official transaction on a copperplate or stone slab', then use in 'expository prose or creative poetry', followed by its use 'to record face-to-face conflict resolution among members of non-elite groups.'[113]

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[106] Ibid, 120.

[107] Ibid, 129.

[108] Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 1–15, lays out the historiographical and conceptual terrain that explains these very different treatments of neoclassical writers, while 23–64 focuses on Keshavdas.

[109] Eaton, 'Rise', 111–12.

[110] Ibid, 112.

[111] See, for instance: Sheikh, 'Bilingual Inscriptions'.

Another important factor was the relationship of a language to political centres and their patronage. Although the Mughals patronised languages like Braj alongside Persian and even Sanskrit, other Indic vernaculars were nurtured in those regional kingdoms in which sovereignty and political legitimacy were vitally linked to a ruling house's origins and intimacy with the locality. As such kingdoms were generally most independent before the Mughal classical age and again in the eighteenth century, it is in these periods that we might expect to see the greater patronage, elevated status, and wider usage of vernacular languages, Marathi being an exceptional but not entirely singular case in point.

Vernaculars were neither replaced by Persian in the Mughal period, however, nor was there a hiatus in vernacularisation between these periods of rapid efflorescence. We can see vernacularisation and Persianisation marching together from the beginning, for Persianisation from above met vernacularisation from below in bilingual documents from the later Delhi Sultanate, with Persian text atop and Hindavi at the bottom.[114] Yet, the literary sphere was bilingual – even multilingual – in a more profound sense, for Persian was neither universally understood, nor was it *the* language of north Indian literary elites, as Francesca Orsini makes clear. Rather, 'vernacular Hindavi oral genres – poems, songs, tales – circulated widely even among Indo-Persian audiences'.[115] Hence, when we come across 'the few but significant instances of Hindavi words and phrases in Persian texts', and a few rare bilingual texts, like the *Rushdnama* (c. 1404) by 'Abd al-Quddus Gangohi, we are encountering the 'traces of a prevalent linguistic and literary reality.'[116] This did not disappear in the next two centuries, but continued to develop in dialogue with Persian and Sanskrit as described, above.

Royal courts were not the only contexts in which vernacular languages developed, even as the courtly mode became a distinct and recognisable part of vernacular corpuses (e.g., Braj *ritigranths*). Other agents of vernacularisation included intellectuals and religious leaders or groups (e.g., *bhaktas*, Sufis) who wrote for local followers, and the adaptation of folkloric genres, which Nile

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[112] Eaton, 'Rise', 126–27, for discussion of Marathi examples.

[113] Ibid, 128.

[114] Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 9, 18.

[115] Orsini, 'Traces', 404.

[116] Ibid, 404.

Green believes to be representative of Dakhni and Urdu, much as also Turkish and Malay.[117] Of course, as in early fifteenth-century Bengal, courts could sponsor folkloric literary and artistic production (e.g., *mangalkavya* – poems concerning Bengali deities such as Chandi that were composed for benediction). There, patronage of folk building styles and Bengali literature, as well as translations into Bengali of the Sanskrit epics and Vaishnava devotional works, were favoured over reproductions of Sanskrit and Persian texts or new works within classical Indic or Persianate architectural traditions.[118] The courtly, intellectual, and folkloric ought not be seen as strictly separable modes of vernacularisation, in other words.[119]

The court, moreover, was not alone in favouring Bengali: sectarian groups also sponsored vernacular literary production (e.g., religious texts, hagiographies of *bhakts* like Chaitanya).[120] To further complicate our understanding of the courtly and any neat distinction of the local/cosmopolitan, we may also note the patronage of Bengali language and literature by Indo-Muslim nobles and merchants, not in Bengal itself, but in the seventeenth-century Buddhist court and kingdom of Mrauk-U or Arakan in present-day Burma. Working in such a milieu allowed Bengali poets like Alaol (fl. 1651–71) to unmoor their use of Bengali from its regional context.[121] Finally, not only litterateurs, but also *performers* – singers and bards intimately familiar with the Sanskrit epics, for example – sometimes played a role in literising and 'translating' (recited versions of) texts into the vernacular, sometimes even translocating and localising them.[122] We can summarise that vernaculars often cleaved into higher, elite, or courtly versus lower, popular, and naturalistic registers, therefore, but only by recognising how such schema represent a simplification of reality.

So transformational was vernacularisation, that its impact was felt by contemporaries, who formulated ways to navigate and even exploit its possibilities. Sumit Guha pithily describes the tension between hybridisation/assimilation and distinction/identity inherent within the process. Knowledgeable of this tension, the responses of erudite contemporaries varied from making dictionaries to guide the unenlightened, to showing off one's virtuosity and flair by employing all the double entendre and puns afforded by this linguistic efflorescence.[123] Others consciously switched between chaste or flamboyant, between heavily Persianised, Sanskritised, or vernacularised language, as befitted their audience and mood.[124] Or, to put it differently (and perhaps too simplistically), they switched between local and cosmopolitan registers. Vernacularisation did not represent a closing-in of the walls, but an opening out and an enriching of the cultural sphere – an experience shared across the early modern world. Antwerp's leading lights might have found it rhetorically and politically productive to conceive the city as a New Rome in the sixteenth century, for example, yet for all such talk, 'the fashion was moving to the local, the immediate: the Netherlandish.'[125] As the shift to vernacular languages was paralleled by a shift to vernacular identities and art forms, rather than classical models or universal lingua francas, so it is to other cultural forms that we must turn to see these developments even more clearly.

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[117] Green, *Sufism*, 104.

[118] For a recent, highly nuanced perspective attentive to the influence of the local (and regional) on the Persianate: Shovelton, 'Revisiting'.

[119] Eaton, *Bengal Frontier*, 66–67.

[120] Eaton, 'Rise', 112–14. For a guide to the developments in premodern Bengali literature and literary culture sketched here: Kaviraj, 'Two Histories'.

[121] d'Hubert, 'Pirates, Poets, and Merchants'.

[122] See, here: Bangha, '*Ramayan* of Vishnudas'. The interrelationship of music, performance, and (the making of) literature has been brilliantly brought to the fore in the essays published in Orsini and Butler Schofield, eds., *Tellings and Texts*, the findings of which are richer than can be summarised here and which also reveal something of the auditory/sonic world of early modern India.

9.3 The Arts

Coined by the historical anthropologist, Bernard Cohn, the term 'Mughal idiom' describes two things. First, that aspects of culture associated with the Timurid dynasty and their court – from dress and deportment to the manner of kingly presentation, from visual culture to the built environment – took a form that was recognisably Mughal by the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, sometimes as a result of the deliberate codification and/or reworking of forms from the Mughal classical age. Second, and as a corollary, that this allowed others – from Mughal *subadars* and the rulers of regional kingdoms, to parvenues and even the Company state – to reference Mughal ideas and styles in their own projects, thereby creating a readily recognisable link between their own political enterprises and Mughal glory. Such deployment and reworking of Mughal references became commonplace by the early eighteenth century and remained important into the high colonial period: one need only look at the lavish ceremonial of the imperial *durbars* staged in Delhi by the colonial government in 1877, 1903, and 1911, or the use of Mughal-style domes, canopies, and windows in the formation of the so-called Indo-Saracenic architectural style in the late nineteenth century, to fathom the enduring power of the Mughal idiom.[126]

Why is this significant to a discussion of vernacularisation? On the one hand, the making of that which was recognisably Mughal by the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century did not involve some sudden, great burst of innovation, but was a gradual historical process in which the Indic and the Islamicate or Persianate, the cosmopolitan and the vernacular, the local and the global were melded together to create hybrid forms or what some have called 'palimpsests'.[127] On the other hand, those regional cultures that flourished following the gradual evacuation of Mughal political control did not represent a kind of nativism or return to indigenous tradition, but were often consciously inflected or infused with recognisably Mughal elements. The latter were thoughtfully appropriated, adapted, and hybridised with local styles or forms. This process often began before the imperial centre weakened vis-à-vis the provinces and localities, such was the lure of Mughal 'high' culture and the arts, but it became more pronounced and picked-up pace from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. There are parallels with vernacularisation in the realm of languages and literature, where the classical or cosmopolitan languages (Sanskrit and Persian) were changed by stages through their encounter with vernaculars, and vice versa. In the cultural arena more broadly, we might think of an early modern dialogue between an imperial style (itself a slowly forming hybrid of influences) and myriad local styles. In what follows, this idea is developed through a necessarily narrow survey, focusing on architecture, art, and music.

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[123] Guha, 'Bad Language', 55. See, also: Obrock, 'Situating Sanskrit', 3–4.

[124] Guha, 'Bad Language', 64.

[125] Pye, *Antwerp*, 34, for citation, and 35, for poignant examples.

[126] Cohn, 'Representing Authority'. See, also: Metcalf, *Ideologies*, here especially 157–99.

9.3.1 Architecture

Known to contemporaries as the Illumined Tomb (*Rauza-i Munawara*), the Taj Mahal is one of the world's most recognisable buildings – and was actually conceived to be so from the beginning. The gleaming white mausoleum on its raised terrace is situated within a larger riverside funerary complex containing gardens and a mosque, all commissioned by Shah Jahan, himself heavily involved in its design. The Taj Mahal represents the apotheosis of Mughal architecture, its constitutive elements – when put together – distinguishing it from Islamicate architecture elsewhere in the Muslim world, and Indic architecture from other Indian building traditions, even as Mughal architects had drawn on each of these traditions in the development of the Mughal style, as we shall see, while also making use of techniques and materials from elsewhere, including Europe (e.g., Italian *pietra dura*).[128] Among its characteristic elements are the use of certain materials, chiefly white marble and red sandstone; architectonic forms such as onion-bulb domes and *chhatris* (pavilions with parasol-shaped domes); and the incorporation of a garden divided into quadrants by waterways. Each of these are perfected from prior Mughal prototypes. Every part of the complex's design and decoration is richly symbolic, moreover, as

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[127] Sohoni, *Deccan Sultanate*, 9, notes that 'notions of hybridity assume the "purity" of styles, an ontologically suspect categorisation', wherein originates the problem with the concept and the preference for terms like 'palimpsest'.

[128] On architects, construction techniques, materials, craftsmanship, and so forth, see: Koch, *Taj Mahal*, 89–94.

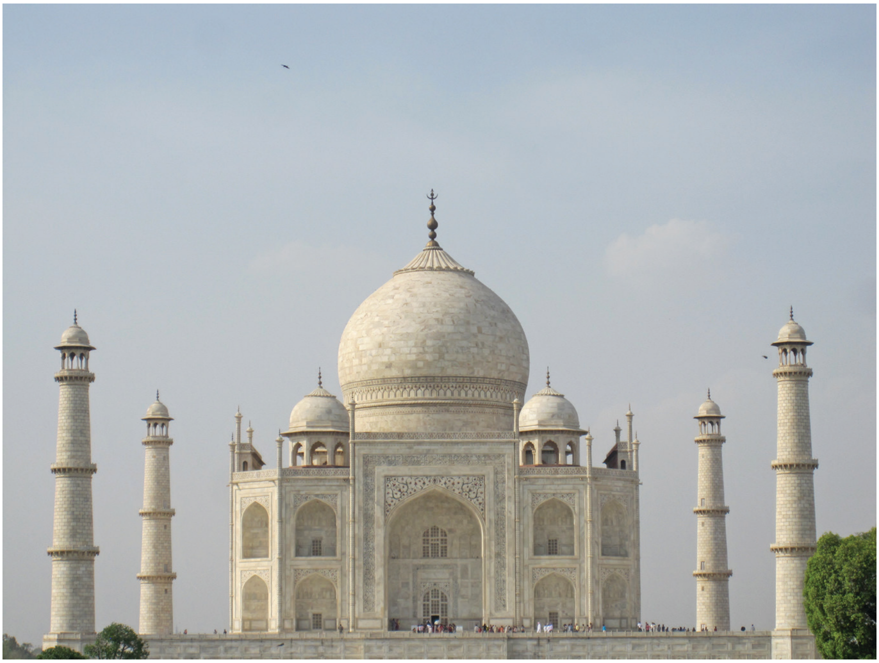

Fig. 9A The Taj Mahal, Agra

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

Ebba Koch brings to our attention, not least in its this-worldly realisation of the garden of Paradise as described in the Quran.[129]

How did Mughal architecture build to this crescendo? The early Mughals could look to the architecture of the Delhi Sultanates, whether by need or by design, and those knowledgeable and skilled people trained in its underpinning architectonic and building traditions. These were palimpsests of forms common in the Islamicate world (e.g., domes, arches), more obviously Islamic elements (e.g., bass relief Arabic inscriptions and Paradisical imagery from the Quran), and motifs from Iranian traditions, as well as floral designs of Indic origin (e.g., lotus medallions and budded creeper motifs).[130] By fusing these elements, a new type of mosque came into being under the Lodis 'that ultimately became a major type in Mughal India.'[131] The regional sultanates also offered prototypes and architectonic forms of which the Mughals would make use, especially from Akbar's time. The sultans of Gujarat, for example, built tombs, shrines, and mosques that made use of features derived from the region's Hindu temples.[132] More importantly still, the early Mughals and their nobles saw themselves as a vital part of Timur's legacy, and thus made extensive use of the Timurid Persianate (or 'Khurasani') style. This was manifested by the construction of 'structures with a large central room surrounded by smaller chambers and arched entranceways of various sizes', for instance, and its situation within a garden of the *chahar-bagh* form (e.g., Humayun's Tomb; §8.2 and Fig. 8E).[133] Only gradually did the Khurasani style begin to spread among non-imperial patrons, however, many of whom favoured Lodi precedents for a time.[134]

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[129] The details here are drawn from: Koch, 'Taj Mahal'. See, also: Koch, *Taj Mahal*, for an expansive treatment, including 215–29, on Paradisical allegory and the symbolism of the combination of red sandstone and white marble (and its pre-Mughal uses).

[130] Asher, *Architecture*, 1–11, here especially 6, and 21–23, for Babur's dislike of some aspects of 'Hindustani' (Indo-Muslim) architecture, although this was not sufficient to stymy its influence, overall.

After the completion of Akbar's new complex at Fatehpur Sikri, large imperial projects ceased in the main, so that it fell upon sub-imperial patrons like Raja Man Singh to propagate the imperial style. At the same time, these sub-imperial projects did a great deal to aid the continuing development and refining of the Mughal style. Man Singh was a keen sponsor of Hindu temple building, most spectacularly at Vrindavan, the place where Krishna is supposed to have spent his youth. Man Singh's order to construct the Govind Deva temple – the largest temple to be put up in north India since the twelfth century – not only fulfilled his personal piety, and the pledge he made in 1572–73 following his victory in the Gujarat campaign, but also serviced imperial interests.[135] At the temple, the Rajput patron brought the styles of the centre – of its mosques, monuments, and palaces – to the construction of a building for Hindu worship, the result being a composite of Indic and Islamicate styles. His architects' created 'a sense of open space hitherto unprecedented in Akbari architecture', making the raja 'an innovator of Mughal taste, not simply an imitator.'[136] Man Singh's spearheading of the Mughal aesthetic resulted in the spread of the imperial presence through the realm: having served in Bihar, where he constructed a vast palace in the developing Mughal style within the Rohtas hill fort, he was transferred to Bengal, where he ordered the construction of a small temple, a bridge, and an enormous new mosque, all built not according to the familiar Bengali tradition, but in the imposing imperial style.[137]

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[131] Ibid, 11, for citation, and 11–14, for wider purview.

[132] Ibid, 10, and 56, 65–66.

[133] Ibid, 16, for citation, and 19–29, for the importance of Timurid Persianate building and garden design to Babur.

[134] Ibid, 34–38.

[135] Asher, 'Architecture', 185–87 for discussion of his motivations in building temples.

[136] Ibid, 185.

[137] Asher, *Architecture*, 68–74. The raja continued with his plans at Rohtas even after he had been reassigned to Bengal.

Other patrons also contributed to the simultaneous spread and enrichment of the Mughal style, whether by engaging with local architectonic traditions or those – especially in the case of immigrant nobles – from the Persianate world. Mun‘im Khan’s still-used Shahi Bridge at Jaunpur, for example, brought elements of Mughal architecture that the nobleman had seen first-hand during his tenure at Fatehpur Sikri together with ideas about observational sight (*manzar*) and the pleasure of taking in a panorama becoming prevalent across the Persianate world, resulting in a structure capped with Mughal *chhatris* that afforded stunning views over the river.[138] Continuing to mature under Jahangir and his nobles’ patronage, regional instantiations of the imperial style also reflected new elements, sometimes deriving from vernacular traditions. Chief among these is the *bangala*, ‘probably modelled on the curved roofs of Bengali huts,’ Catherine B. Asher noted, and ‘pertinent to the subsequent development of Mughal architecture’, particularly public viewing chambers in Shah Jahani palaces.[139]

It was under Shah Jahan, probably the greatest patron of architecture and urban building, as we have seen in Chapter 4, that the Mughal style attained its recognisable form. Chanchal Dadlani has recently drawn attention to the codification of Shahjahani architecture from the late seventeenth century. This codification encompassed the spatial layout of buildings, as well as their particular materiality, forms, and details. Its origins were manifold: Aurangzeb’s desire to establish highly visible connections to his father, so that he might be seen as Shah Jahan’s true legacy, not least in the wake of the war of succession he fought against the favourite for the throne; the apprenticeship and training of a new generation of architects with masters of the older, Shah Jahani era; and the promulgation of formal regulations that operated alongside a developing set of norms regarding visual propriety.[140] It provided a historically reflexive visual lexicon, grammar, and etiquette for builders through the long eighteenth century, whether for imperial or sub-imperial patrons, for entire palace-complexes in the environs of the Mughal walled capital and in new cities such as Najibabad, Farrukhabad, and Faizabad, but also for those putting up single buildings within Shahjahanabad and as far south as the Deccan (the mausoleum built in Aurangabad for one of Aurangzeb’s wives, known as the Bibi ka Maqbara, for instance, is a reworking of the Taj Mahal).[141] In Lahore, Aurangzeb (Alamgir) ordered the construction of what is now known as the Alamgiri Gate (Fig. 9B). It faces onto the Padshahi Mosque (Fig. 9C), also built on his orders, and which references the prototype in his father's capital at Shahjahanabad (see: Fig. 4E).

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[138] Hosseini, ‘Safavid and Mughal Urban Bridges’. See, also: Asher, *Architecture*, 75–98, for a survey of other sub-imperial patrons and their commissions across the realm during Akbar’s reign.

[139] Asher, *Architecture*, 99–168, for a general overview, 165, for citation, 152–65, on regional sub-styles, and 180–81, 186–87, 194, 205–07, 247–48, for examples of Shah Jahani-era uses of *bangalas* both within imperial and sub-imperial commissions.

[140] Dadlani, *From Stone*, 22, 45–53. For a survey of Mughal imperial and sub-imperial architecture in Aurangzeb’s times, see: Asher, *Architecture*, 252–91.

[141] See, also: Michell and Philon, *Islamic Architecture*, 396–407, for a visual survey of the mausoleum; Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 70–71, for details of the palace-complexes in these cities.

This did not mean late Mughal and successor state architecture was stuck in a time warp: contemporaries held that artistic merit sprang from innovative responses to the aesthetic models of Shahjahani architecture, not in its overturning in favour of something wholly new, in keeping with the notion of *istiqbal*.[142] The result at first appears like a double paradox. On the one hand, it 'allowed the later Mughals to animate their past, refashion their identity, and stage authority, even as they experienced political loss.'[143] On the other hand, (critical) engagement with the codes of Mughal historicism by patrons seeking to assert their independence from, or opposition to, the Mughals actually vitalised the empire's past and its very real present. Thus, we see engagement with the Mughal style by patrons ranging from the *nawabs* of Awadh and Hyderabad, to the Sikhs in their capital at Lahore and the pilgrimage centre of Amritsar.[144]

Significantly, the beneficiaries of imperial disintegration drew strength from the visual language of Mughal art and architecture. An important early example is Safdar Jang's funerary complex, southwest of the walled city of Shahjahanabad. In the first place, there is its location in Delhi, rather than in the city of Faizabad or Lucknow in the province of Awadh. Safdar Jang became governor of Awadh in 1739 – a time when he still owed his allegiance to the Mughals even though his predecessors had steadily become more autonomous from the Mughal centre and gained control over revenues and the army in their own right. Safdar Jang's body was briefly laid to rest in Awadh, which was by then a lively artistic and cultural centre, before it was finally interred in Delhi. Second, is its scale and form, which was comparable at the time of its erection only to the funerary complexes of the emperors and their wives (Humayun's tomb, the Taj Mahal, Bibi ka Maqbara); nobles had previously been interred either in much smaller garden tombs or, more usually, in simpler structures. It thus represented an appropriation of the Mughal funerary complex of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by a Mughal noble at a time when the emperors were themselves no longer being interred in such places.

Finally, there is its plan and appearance, which draws heavily on Mughal role models and not upon those provided by important Shi'i sites (the shrine of 'Ali in Najaf, of Husayn in Karbala, or Imam Riza in Mashad), or the architecture of other Indian Shi'i dynasties (such as the erstwhile Adil Shahis of Bijapur, Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar, or Qutb Shahis of Golkonda and Hyderabad), or even the very distinctive styles of Awadh itself. This was despite Safdar Jang's Shi'i identity. The tomb 'incorporates Safdar Jang and his

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[142] Dadlani, *From Stone*, 23–45.

[143] Ibid, 1.

[144] Asher, *Architecture*, 310–29. On the earlier and broader engagement of Sikh patrons with the Mughal idiom – and artists and writers schooled in it – see: Fenech, *Darbar*.

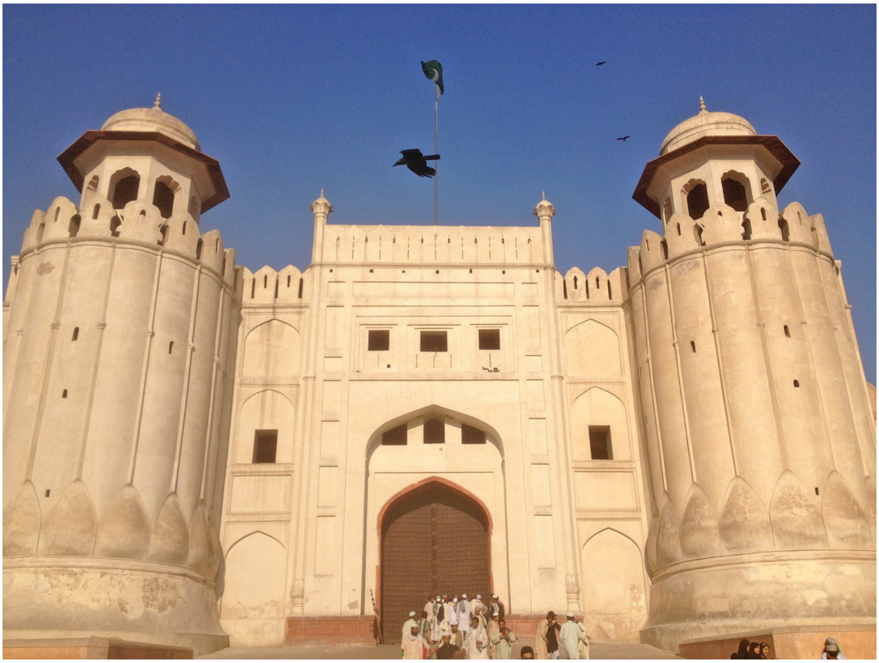

Fig. 9B Alamgiri Gate, Lahore Fort

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

dynasty into the Mughal imperial line, precisely at the moment when the Awadhis were rising to power'.[145] It became a role model for the evolving Awadhi style, and thereby at once reinscribed yet reformulated the relationship of the 'centre' to the 'province', or the imperial to the vernacular.[146] In time, at the end of our period, Lucknow would supersede the cosmopolitan flamboyance of Shahjahanabad, yet remained visually linked to the Mughal capital.[147] Thus, as power tilted from the erstwhile centre to the provinces, the regional capitals became the loci of major architectural patronage that reworked or else was highly inflected by earlier Mughal prototypes.

To summarise, the Mughal or imperial style of architecture developed via an engagement with myriad influences (i.e., extant structures, but also communities of craftsmen, engineers, architects, and so on). These include what can be called Indic and Indian regional architectural traditions, either seen directly

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[145] Dadlani, *From Stone*, 91, for citation, and 73–101, for analysis of the tomb from which the present discussion is derived.

[146] Ibid, 105–08.

[147] Asher, *Architecture*, 318–23.

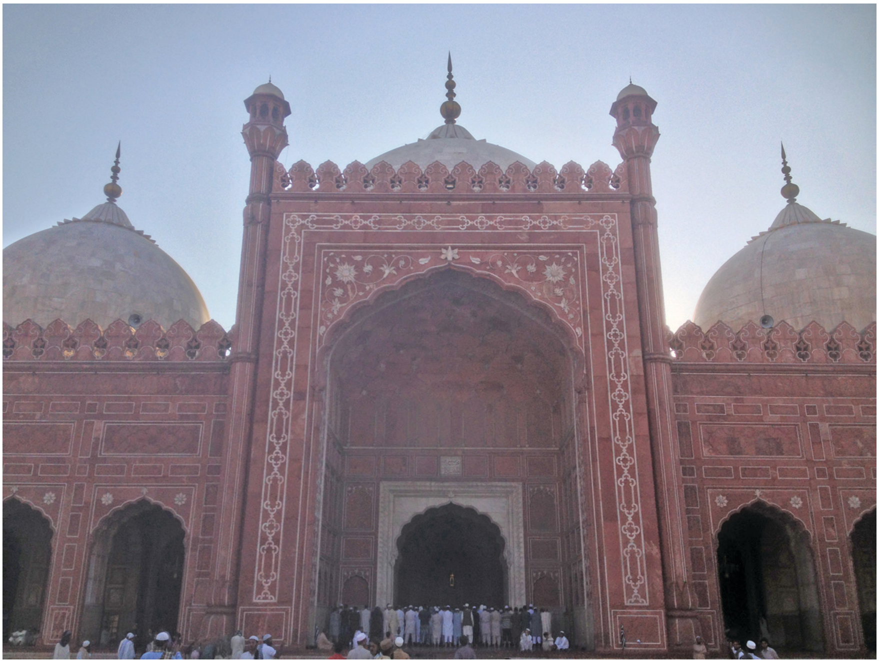

Fig. 9C Padshahi Masjid, Lahore Fort

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

or via Sultanate-era and other prototypes. This not only vernacularised the Khurasani style favoured by the early Mughals, but also led to regionalised variations of the imperial idiom when it was taken by imperial or sub-imperial patrons into the provinces. The decline of the Mughal Empire saw not the abandonment, but the *spread* of this high style, partly through the codification of Shah Jahani architecture. Though we have focused here on the architecture of the Mughal Empire and its northern successors, it bears stating that a very similar pattern concerning Vijayanagara and its heirs is now becoming clear thanks to work by scholars like Jennifer Howes.[148]

Besides the spread of the Mughal high style, two other developments are noticeable in the late Mughal period. The first was the result of sub-imperial or regional rulers experimenting anew with Indic traditions to forge a new kind of built environment. Jaipur, for instance, was laid out in the early eighteenth century, its plan reflecting an utterly novel amalgam of wisdom contained in the *Vashtu shastra* with inspiration taken from the Mughal *chahar-bagh*

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[148] Howes, *Courts*.

(§4.2.1).[149] A second development was the resurgence of regional vernaculars, most acutely exemplified in Bengal. Already, in the early part of Aurangzeb's reign, there was a tilt from the imperial to the vernacular, visible in the tomb of Fateh Khan, a noble associated with Prince Shah Shuja (1616–61). The 'rectangular tomb is surmounted by a deeply sloped *bangala* roof and appears to be the first extant example in Bengal of a Mughal structure', built by the Mughal elite, Asher observed, 'that is entirely covered with this roof type, commonly believed to have originated here.'[150] Its form was referenced in later buildings, such as mosques.[151] The regions' wealthy Hindu elites, too, made use of traditional styles and materials (e.g., terracotta tiles) when constructing temples from the latter part of the seventeenth century.[152] After relocating his capital to Murshidabad, for he ruled with increasing autonomy from the Mughal centre, Murshid Quli Khan's first architectural project was a congregational Friday mosque. Although its plan is typical of the regional variant of Mughal architecture, it also incorporates pre-Mughal Bengali elements, to the extent that the 'break with the Mughal ornamental style', Asher remarked, 'parallels the patron's assertion of independence.'[153]

9.3.2 Painting

More than architecture or other cultural fields, art has received the lion's share of scholarly attention. Mughal art predominates over other early modern Indian traditions (e.g., Deccani art, although the gap has lately been closing), with the overwhelming focus on the production of the court. This last comes at the expense of temples, for instance, although Sufi *dargahs* are well-represented in scholarship. As for medium or type, the study of drawing, the art of the book, and especially painting prevails over the plastic arts (perhaps less so if one looks to the south).[154] As we shall see, the wider appreciation of Mughal painting was contemporaneous and has continued ever since.

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[149] For an instructive guide to the *Manasara* (a treatise on architecture and building) and the wider *Vashtu shastra* genre, see: Howes, *Courts*, 8–26.

[150] Asher, *Architecture*, 284.

[151] Ibid, 286.

[152] Ibid, 288.

[153] Ibid, 329.

[154] A blockbuster exhibition in 2015 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, helped Deccani art enter the mainstream in the West; see: Haidar and Sardar, eds., *Sultans*, for the excellent accompanying catalogue now freely available online via the museum's website. There are a number of useful surveys of the art and architecture of the Deccan from the Bahmani and Vijayanagara polities, through the Nayaka states and Deccan sultanates, and to Mughal, Maratha, and Asaf Jahi rule. Michell and Zebrowski, *Architecture and Art*, provides an illustrative and descriptive guide on Deccani arts, extending well beyond painting, while Hutton, *Bijapur*, is more analytical, revolving around '[cross-]cultural interaction' and 'courtly identity' as motors of artistic development. See, also: Michell, *Southern India*; Michell and Philon, *Islamic Architecture*; Sohoni, *Deccan Sultanate*. Note, however, that the coastal states, such as Calicut/Kozhikode and Cochin, remain outside recent surveys and analyses.

History's recent cultural, material, and visual turns have all played their part in refreshing the scholarship, meanwhile also helping to garner new interest in other pictorial traditions and styles. Cumulatively, these 'turns' have given impetus to the study of cultural themes (over the economy, which long predominated), or else gave scholars the courage to grapple with material that was not primarily textual.[155] The study of kingship and imperial ideology has taken new directions thanks to these developments (Chapter 8), which have also nourished new fields, such as music and performance. Indian visual culture is consequently no longer the sole preserve of the art historian, and more interdisciplinary ways of working are producing some of the best scholarship.[156]

History's global turn has also taken scholars in new directions. Images are especially fruitful objects of study among scholars interested in connections, exchanges, and circulations, not least of the period from c.1500 as the world steadily became more globalised. Images, after all, were mobile in a way that buildings or even building styles were not, and to a greater degree than, say, musical traditions.[157] Indian rulers amassed old pictures, whether as prototypes or because of the symbolic value of a collection to rulers like Muhammad Ali Khan, Nawab of Arcot (r.1749–95).[158] The court of Awadh had purchased an illustrated and bound copy of the *Padshahnama* for some Rs.12,000 (or £1500 in the currency of the time), the very copy subsequently gifted to King George III and now housed in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle. This gives some indication of the power deriving from connection to the Mughal imperium even during its decline as a territorial entity.[159] The availability of Indian pictures increased hugely after the colonial conquests of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when royal collections were sequestered as 'prize' and sold on the open market, then often resold at auction houses in Britain and Europe.[160] The fondness for Indian miniatures extended beyond those European states and imperialisms most closely connected to the subcontinent; Maria Theresa's decoration of a room at the palace of Schönbrunn with 266 sixteenth – and seventeenth-century Indian pictures – each removed from their album, cut to shape to be pasted and mounted in gold rococo frames – is remarkable only because of the extraordinary and excessively lavish way in which prized pictures were displayed.[161]

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[155] Finn, 'Material Turns', 6–7.

[156] See, for instance, the innovative use of visual sources to open new fields of inquiry taken in: Orsini and Schofield, eds., *Tellings and Texts*.

[157] That said, the musical traditions of Hindustan and Bengal did 'travel' around the Bay of Bengal arena, and we might usefully try to hear the expansive 'sonic geography' or 'soundworlds' of particular forms and styles in other traditions. The findings of the group project, 'Musical Transitions to European Colonialism in the Eastern Indian Ocean' (2011–15), led by Katherine Butler Schofield, will continue to be instrumental in this regard.

[158] Eaton, 'Colonial Despotism', 68–70.

[159] Beach and Koch, *eds.*, *Padshahnama*, 13.

[160] Eaton, 'Nostalgia'.

[161] Eaton, 'Colonial Despotism', 68.

The analysis of images has been formative of the fields of global cultural history and global material culture studies, not to mention critical to positioning south Asia within the connected early modern world. From the 1580s onwards, Indian artists' steady exposure to contemporary European images had a lasting impact, not being restricted to copying popular prints of Roman heroes, but even copying and reworking Madonna and Child imagery and other Christian subjects within the miniature tradition (Fig. 9D).[162] This is remarkable, no matter that the missionary encounter produced similarly hybrid artworks elsewhere in Asia.[163] That said, 'hybridity' fails to capture the selective engagement with – and reworking of – very particular motifs and topoi. Much as Dutch artworks influenced Japanese visual culture where the former fit within existing traditions, so Mughal artists readily incorporated those features that *converged* with extant or developing pictorial conventions or with the concerns of patrons.[164]

If a new naturalism is discernible in Mughal painting from the late Akbari and Jahangiri periods, for example, it arose from the confluence of Netherlandish innovation with Mughal concerns. Imperial artists could consult copies of Dutch, Flemish, and German pictures made by Antwerp's great printing houses, among them prints based on Albrecht Dürer's pictures, but also those illustrations contained in the Polygot Bible; these resonated with Akbar's interest in religious iconography.[165] Mughal artists also saw a new kind of perspective and landscape painting in these pictures, which influenced their own work.[166] Jahangir's fascination for the natural world inclined him – as connoisseur, patron, and investigator of the natural world, in each of these respects much like his near-contemporary, the Habsburg ruler, Rudolf II (r. 1576–1612) – to the observation of minute detail then also characteristic of Netherlandish art.[167] Jahangir's artists were instructed to paint from life, although they also made use of woodcuts of flora and fauna that had been made to accompany herbals and books on the natural sciences printed in Christophe Plantin's workshop in Antwerp (§10.1).[168]

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[162] See: §3.3, for the invitation of the Jesuits to the Mughal court and thus the larger context to the resulting influx of European images.

[163] See: Bailey, 'Religious Encounters'. See, also: Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism*, 26–67. For a Madonna and Child derived from the Polyglot Bible yet placed in Indian setting, see: Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 61.

[164] Screech, *Tokyo*, 125–26. To glimpse European influences on Deccani murals, see: Michell and Philon, *Islamic Architecture*, 74–75, 282–83, 316–17.

[165] Koch, 'Being Like Jesus and Mary', which is an updated and expanded version of her groundbreaking essay on the Polyglot Bible, now also encompassing the impact of other Antwerp prints on the Mughals. See, also: Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 66, 70, 74, for other examples.

[166] Koch, 'Netherlandish Naturalism'. See, further: Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism*, 152–204. Netherlandish art also reached the Deccani ateliers, unsurprising given south India's contact with European trading organisations, where it was enthusiastically incorporated into Deccani artworks; see: Overton, 'Introduction', 10.

[167] Koch, 'Jahangir and Bacon', here especially 299–305.

[168] Ibid, here 307–27 for a rich analysis of how these images were used by Mughal artists.

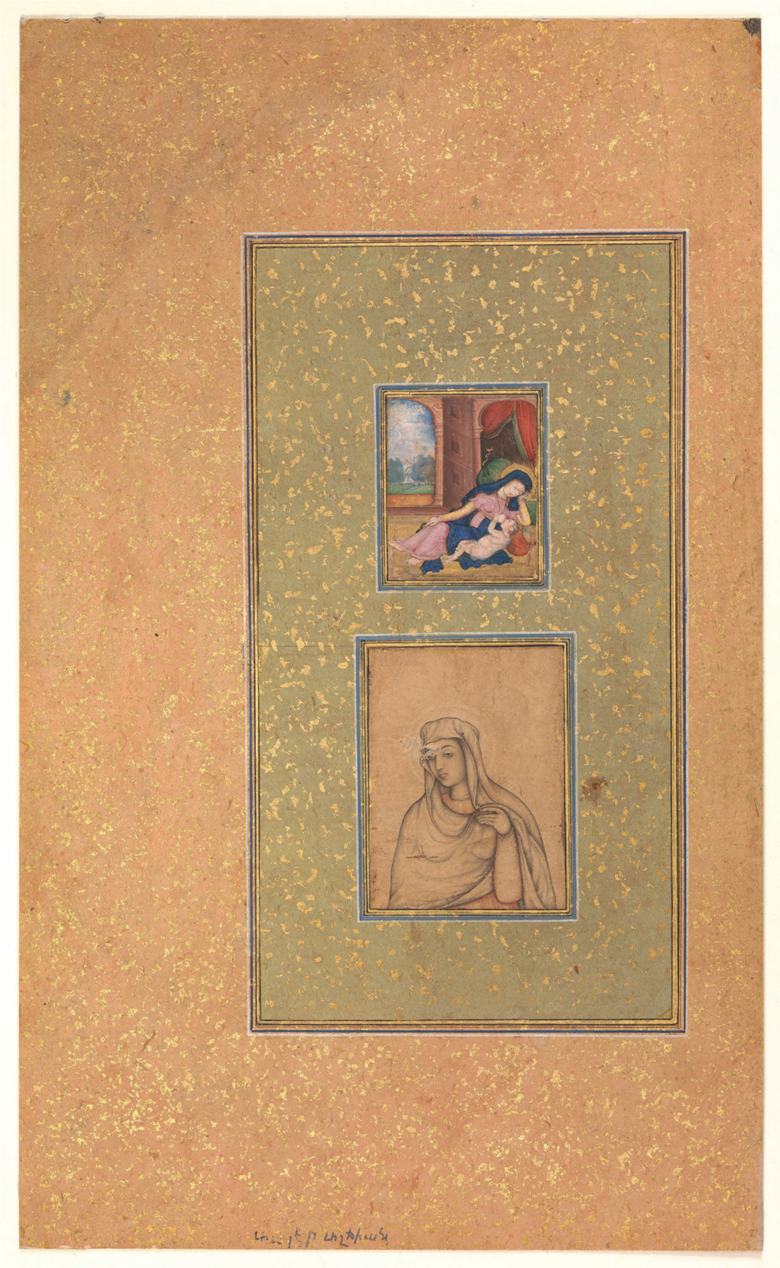

Fig. 9D Mughal Artists' Copying and Reworking of European Pictures (watercolour, ink, and gold; unknown Mughal artist; late sixteenth century)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2012.132

Mughal artists of the early seventeenth century began to depict Muslim saints and the emperors with halos or nimbuses, sometimes surrounded by *putti* or cherubs, which they also lifted from European pictures, using gold paint or leaf so that these halos literally reflected divine light as per Indo-Persianate illuminationist philosophy (§8.2). At the same time, they reworked the Madonna and Child topos by injecting it with embodiments of Persian and Arabic literary motifs to lend an erotic charge, thereby producing an uncannily new image, to take a further example.[169] In sum, Indian artists did not merely imitate European artworks, techniques, or iconography; they highly selectively appropriated and adapted elements, repurposing and recoding them to create the distinct Mughal style and topoi by the early to mid-seventeenth century. Mika Natif describes this as no less than 'Mughal Occidentalism' – her coinage an intentional mirror-image of the Orientalism evident in the work of those European artists who appropriated and reworked images and imagery from the near East and Asia.[170]

Such interest in long-distance and cross-cultural encounters and exchanges can misleadingly give the impression that major artistic influences flowed primarily from Occident to Orient in early modern times, with a return flow of artworks from east to west.[171] Unsurprisingly, therefore, the conceptual framework of exchanges – so key to early modern global cultural history – soon gave ground to 'circulation' and a heightened attention to the myriad directions in which influences, impacts, and objects themselves moved. Much as with architecture, the identity, materiality, and conventions of Mughal (and Deccani) art were rooted in a Persianate tradition – that of miniature painting on paper. The eagerness of Persian artists to travel to India made this possible. Thus, for example, an established painter, Farrukh Beg, left Iran to paint for the Mughal emperors at the court in Kabul and then Lahore. He spent a time at the Bijapur court, a fairly unsurprising destination for Farrukh Beg and his compatriots, yet also indicating something of the complex patterns of circulation and the transmission of artistic styles at the time. He then returned to the Mughal domains and ended his career in Agra.[172]

Instead of homogenising the art of Iran, the Mughal north, and the Deccan, highly distinctive artistic styles developed as a result. This is partly because

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[169] Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism*, 1, for this example.

[170] Ibid, 7–12, for a critical discussion of terminology, and especially 68–109, for analysis that centres on artists as the driving-force of the new images coming out of the Mughal atelier.

[171] See, however, the excellent catalogue to the *Encounters* exhibition by Jackson and Jaffer that examines 'Asia in Europe' as well as 'Europe in Asia'.

[172] Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 11, 62–67. For a rich survey of the Iran-Deccan circulation of artists, materials, and cultural ideas, see: Overton, ed., *Iran.* Few artists are thought to have left the Mughal domains for the Deccan, but at least one highly talented artist is known to have done so, shaping Deccani art, in turn: Michell and Zebrowski, *Architecture and Art*, 177–79.

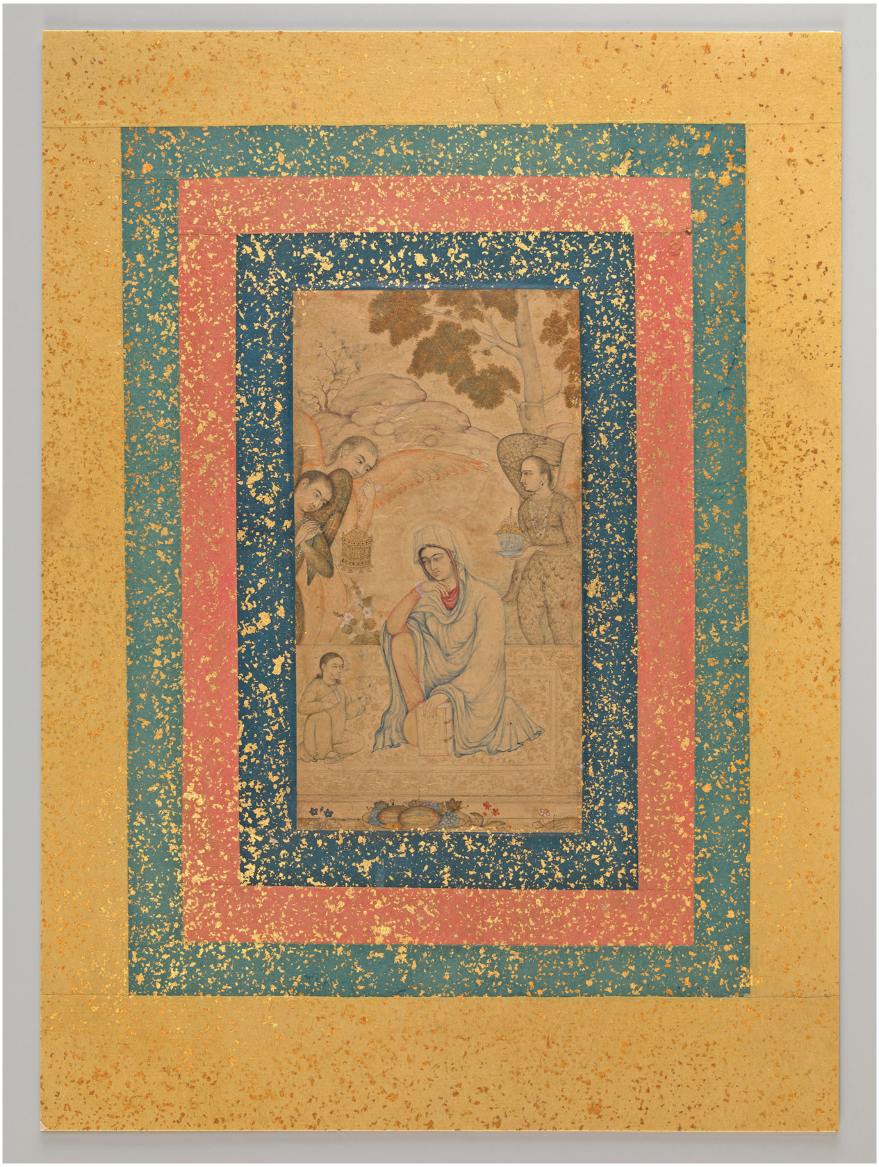

Fig. 9E The Virgin and Child Attended by Angels, in an Indic Style (coloured inks and gold; attributed to Manohar; c. 1600)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2015.785

Mughal (and Deccani) patrons and their painters consciously appropriated or adapted Islamicate and Indic subjects, symbols, and motifs into the framework of the Persianate tradition.[173] Of specifically Indic elements, we might note the appearance of Indian flora and fauna in the decorative borders of artworks, in scene pictures (e.g., of hunts), and as subjects in their own right; the painting of Indian personages and characters (e.g., yogis, *bhaktas*, Jain ascetics); and the lavish illustration of Sanskrit epics and literary works, such as the *Anwar-i-Suhaili* or 'Lights of Canopus' of 1571, which was a fifteenth-century Persian translation of animal fables contained in the Sanskrit *Panchatantra*, the *Razmnama*/*Mahabharata* of 1586, the *Harivamsa* or 'Genealogy of Vishnu' of 1586, and the *Ramayana* of 1587–88 (§3.3.3).[174] A good example of a hybrid product or palimpsest – in the fullest sense, encompassing subject *and* style – can be found in illustrated manuscripts of the *Tutinama* ('Tales of a Parrot'), an anthology of folk tales in Persian based on an older Sanskrit work popular in Sultanate and Mughal India. Parrots were often animated in Indian literature like the *Panchatantra* or the *Shukasaptati* and, in the *Tutinama*, it is a parrot who tells one story a night – for fifty-two consecutive nights – to its mistress. Among the earliest manuscripts attributed to Akbar's atelier is a *Tutinama*, itself a significant example showing the development toward the Mughal high style.[175]

The distinctiveness of Mughal painting also owes something to more specifically local influences, and the continuities evident in Mughal art with earlier or still-extant Sultanate and Rajput painterly traditions also have something to do with the painters themselves.[176] In the first place, we should note that the art of the Delhi Sultanates was also of the Persianate type and was also influenced by Indic elements, so that a distinctive Indo-Persianate artistic tradition existed long before the Mughal conquest. Perhaps a conscious choice in some respects, this also resulted from the employment of artists trained in the Hindu and Jain traditions within the Sultanate ateliers.[177] By the later sixteenth century, the Persian masters Mir Sayyid 'Ali and Khwaja 'Abd al-Samad, who trained in Shah Tahmasp's atelier, had been coaxed into Mughal service and began actively recruiting Indian painters, giving rise to the fusion of styles that would gradually be tamed (to a degree) into the Mughal style.[178] Persianate art was itself changing, however, with a new direction evident after Humayun's return to India. In the hands of artists like Basawan, a Hindu artist who joined Akbar's atelier as a young man, the new Persianate style was combined with new perspectival techniques and a new kind of naturalism taken from exposure to European pictures to produce something strikingly new.[179]

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[173] On 'syncretism' in the Deccan, see: Michell and Zebrowski, *Architecture and Art*, 145–225, 268–72.

[174] See: Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 29–31, 39–42, for discussion of some the manuscripts mentioned here, and 84–85, for the reproduction of a double album page depicting various Indian holy men. For a Jain ascetic: Crill and Jariwala, *Indian Portrait*, 72–73.

[175] Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 21–25.

[176] Though flawed by distinguishing Rajput and Mughal as Hindu/indigenous and Muslim/foreign, Beach's *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, especially 4–39, offers a useful introduction to the context to, and early phases in the development of, the Mughal style.

[177] Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 17–25 on these Indian traditions and their development, which notes their responsiveness – especially in the west – to influences and materials flowing from overseas over the longue durée, 29–31, for the reproduction and analysis of an example of a fifteenth-century 'Jain-style' *Shahnama* manuscript.

Before turning to some of the distinctive and innovative features of the Mughal high style and its genres and topoi, it is worth saying a little more about artists. In the pre-Mughal period, little is known of artists' identities. It may have been that Indian artists saw themselves as part of a craft tradition, as many continued to do long into the eighteenth century.[180] In this, they were not alone. The identities of most European artists have been lost to obscurity. Why? Well into the early modern period, art remained a craft and a profession in Europe – one tightly controlled by guilds, moreover – and many artists worked in teams ('studios').[181] Change was swept in, as Huizinga famously observed, by those developments nowadays lumped under the rubric of the 'northern Renaissance', including innovation in materials, techniques, and 'tricks' in perspective and optics (this last thanks to new scientific learning). Those who could master their use might acquire a reputation and rise above the unknown craftsman, as was the genius of Jan van Eyck (d. 1441).[182] Consciousness of the self, however, was an even more important 'discovery' made during the Renaissance – one, as we shall see, discernible across the early modern world at large (§10.2). Thus, artists acquired fame as individuals, even when continuing to work in studios and/or within guilds, and the artist's self-portrait was born, either found tucked away in a commission or as a composition in its own right.[183]

Importantly, much the same can be said of Indian artists from the late sixteenth century. Training in a craft was received within the family unit, so that many of those painters who are known to us by name are also known as the relative of some other artist: 'Abid and Abu'l Hasan, Balchand and Payag, to name imperial artists, or Manaku and Nainsukh from the hills (discussed, below), or Shivalal and Mohanlal of Mewar, were all brothers; fathers and sons also abound.[184] The imperial artists worked in the Mughal *kitabkhana*

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[178] Ibid, 54–57.

[179] Ibid, 42–49.

[180] Ibid, 10.

[181] Chipps Smith, *Northern Renaissance*, 15–32, which also broaches the gendering of the profession.

[182] Huizinga, *Autumntide*, 368–69, 398, for a now-classic analysis; Martens *et al*, *Van Eyck*, for the most up-to-date exploration of the master's genius, his corpus, its contributions.

[183] The reasons for painting such a self-portrait were many and complex, however; see: Chipps Smith, *Northern Renaissance*, especially 15–16, 31–32.

[184] Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 10.

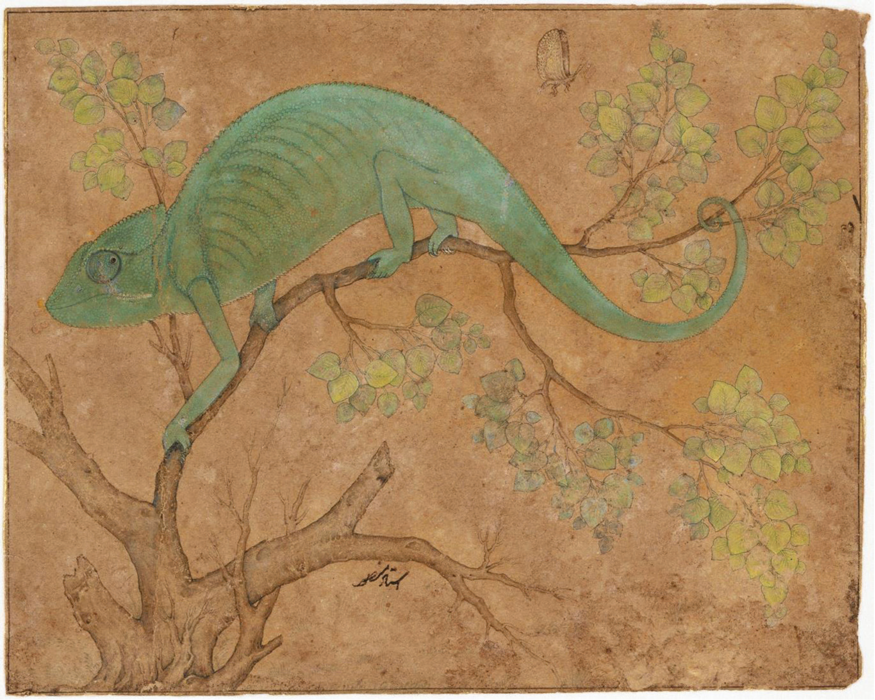

Fig. 9F Chameleon (watercolour and inks; by the Mughal artist Mansur; c. 1612)

Art Heritage / Alamy Stock Photo

(library) alongside calligraphers, bookbinders, and the keepers of those books and albums they painted, a setup also found in many regional courts that had their own ateliers. A master (*ustad*) would organise the division of labour necessary for a highly complex commission, like the illustration of a narrative scene accompanying the text of a work like the *Akbarnama*: one artist drew, another painted, and sometimes another still might be required to cast the portraits, for instance.[185]

Only a fraction of all the hundreds of imperial artists and artisans are today known to us, perhaps because they were written about at the time (e.g., those artists named in the *Ain-i Akbari*), signed their work, and/or possessed a genius and distinctive personal style discernible by scholars in other works formative of their artistic corpora. But it is significant that we know of such painters as Mansur (active late 1580s to c. 1626), whose masterful paintings of flora and fauna helped him earn the accolade of being titled Nadir al-Asr (the 'Wonder of the Age'), and Manohar (active c. 1582–1620s), the son of Basawan, whose own likeness is captured in two portraits, the latter painted by one of his contemporaries.[186] Many other Indian painters' likenesses were captured by their peers, while some, such as Mir Sayyid 'Ali, also made self-portraits.[187] This represented a break with Indian convention, reflecting the growing self-consciousness that came with the move toward realism and psychological depth as much as the supposed discovery of the self.

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[185] Stronge, 'Portraiture', 27.

Portraits were made as single-leaf pictures or incorporated into larger compositions. In a radical departure from the Indic convention of depicting human faces by drawing idealised or stylised features, Mughal draughtsman and painters made (male) portraits from life that realistically depicted the sitter, although always in profile in the case of the emperor or his inner circle, and the less prestigious three-quarter view for others.[188] (In fact, as Milo C. Beach summarises, 'painting as precise record of specific events, personalities, or objects is not known among the pre-Mughal Indian traditions'; hence, the illustration of biographical and historical works was also a departure from convention).[189] The snapshot-in-time realism of the 'observed' portrait was impressive, but some master painters would go on to capture portraits with psychological depth that encapsulated the character and state of mind of the sitter.[190] Perhaps the most singular example is the pitiful 'Dying Inayat Khan' attributed to Hashim and painted c.1618–19.[191]

Portraiture became an independent genre of Mughal art that left a lasting impact. As sub-imperial rulers saw the work of imperial artists or sat for their own portraits, sometimes receiving these as gifts, so they became enchanted by the potential of such images and commissioned their own artists to make portraits of themselves and their nobles.[192] Aside from such portraits proper, Mughal artists also incorporated portraiture into hunting and court scenes, whether in the context of manuscript illustration (e.g., of the *Akbarnama*) or as single-leaf pictures in albums, which also became very popular productions at the regional courts.[193]

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[186] Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 58, 80–85.

[187] Stronge, 'Portraiture', 24 and n.6.

[188] On the thinking behind full and three-quarter profile, see: Koch, 'Netherlandish Naturalism', 34. Natif, *Mughal Occidentalism*, 205–60, more fully examines the development of Mughal portraiture vis-à-vis European prototypes. Mughal developments took off in the 1590s, just after Deccani artists began experimenting with the art of portraiture, as evinced by a portrait of Sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II of Bijapur of c.1590 now in the David Collection, Copenhagen, and reproduced in Crill and Jariwala, *Indian Portrait*, 110–11. See, also: Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 35–38. Being confined to the *harem*, women were not painted from life; *C.f. op. cit.*, 96.

[189] Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 15.

[190] Krill and Jariwala, eds., *Indian Portrait*, provides an excellent overview of the departures made by Mughal artists, while also describing earlier realism (and abstraction) in Indian portraiture.

[191] Reproduced in: Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 110.

[192] See: Crill, 'Portraiture'.

Working from natural life – as Jahangir commanded his artists to do – not only led to such works as Mansur's intimate study of a chameleon (c.1595–1600), but an entirely new genre – the zoological portrait (Fig. 9F). Within this genre was an important sub-genre devoted to horses so extensive that we can discern two compositional types or topoi. The first is the equine portrait, which are life studies of particular horses, often favourites, prize specimens, or gifts from nobleman or diplomats. These picture may have origins in sixteenth-century Iran, but the Mughal pictures are distinctive.[194] The second is the equestrian portrait, in which the emperor is depicted on horseback. They are a wholly and distinctly Mughal invention, drawing on the sacred and royal symbolism of horses from Islamicate, Persianate, and Indic traditions, among other sources.[195] They were highly charged images, which gave them tremendous currency among sub-imperial rulers and parvenus, who imitated but also 'vernacularised' them, to use the term in a way that pre-empts arguments made below.[196] But equestrian and other kinds of portraits also circulated much farther. Because the imperial artists made copies of important pictures, exemplars soon reached the capitals of European trading nations. Some landed in Amsterdam via Surat, following a journey on VOC ships, where they captivated the celebrated Dutch artist, Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69), with twenty-five of his 'creative copies' of Indian miniatures in pen and ink surviving today. Artistic motifs certainly flowed from the west to India, where they were often assimilated, but Rembrandt's drawings-cum-studies suggest inspiration and images occasionally flowed back to the Low Countries, too, even if they were merely reworked rather than incorporated into the kinds of pictures that had a ready market.[197]

Though scarcely doing it justice, this brief survey ought signal the transformation ushered by Mughal painting by the mid-seventeenth century, which was a cosmopolitan and 'high' artistic tradition.[198] Artists brought in to work on big imperial commissions in Akbar's time were subsequently released, taking the skills and ideas learnt in the imperial atelier to those sub-imperial courts where they now found employment, marking the first phase of the diffusion and vernacularisation of the imperial style, although their output remained restricted to traditional genres and subjects (e.g., religious texts and *Ragamalas*).[199] Another phase was in motion from the late seventeenth century, for artists continued to find employment in the imperial studios and continued to produce magnificent works, but the opportunities were even greater in the regional courts. In part, this was due to Aurangzeb's relative disinterest in the visual arts when compared to his predecessors, as well as his long spells away from the north. It was also because sub-imperial rulers, for their part, began to see the value of art to their sovereignty and kingly self-fashioning. In the same vein, they also amassed Mughal artworks (by gift, purchase, or plunder), which they prized and took care to preserve as part of their collections, much as European rulers did, too, during the Thirty Years' War and in the course of other opportunities for the appropriation of prestigious courts' art and library collections.[200]

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[193] For a reappraisal of albums not as careless scrapbooks of images but carefully and consciously crafted products, see: Fetvacı, *Album*.

[194] Canby, 'Persian Horse Portraits'. Even more distinctive are the otherworldly pictures of emaciated horses made in the Deccan; see: Hutton, *Bijapur*, 146–54.

[195] I have argued as much in Lally, 'Equines', but Mughal artists were copying European prototypes in the early seventeenth century (as shown, e.g., in the reproductions in Schrader, *Rembrandt*, 126–27), which might have been the source of the Mughal type of equestrian portrait.

[196] Lally, 'Equines'.

[197] Schrader, ed., *Rembrandt*, especially the contribution by Yael Rice noting the way early modern engravers also must have reworked Indian images, and the multifarious ways Indian artists reworked and mutated European prints beyond mere 'copying'. On engravers working from Indian pictures, see also: Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 106–07, 109. Other Europeans also worked from Mughal pictures, such as Willem Schellinks (1623–78); see: Gommans and de Hond, 'Local Milieu'.

[198] The present discussion has said relatively little about Shah Jahani-era developments in painting, but see: Koch, *Collected Essays*, 130–62. To grasp the steady evolution of Mughal

Artists moved outward from the centre during Aurangzeb's reign, but many – whether imperially or regionally trained – also moved between courts given the capriciousness of the political climate.[201] A patron might be looking for imperial painters' finesse and their familiarity with discernibly Mughal types of images, but, equally, he was eager to support local artists, styles, and themes as he sought to present himself as the authentic leader of the locality or region. The result was the propagation of Mughal styles, genres, and topoi, on the one hand, and the revitalisation of regional traditions, on the other, often simultaneously.[202] There was sometimes a tension between these two forces, depending on how conservative a patron was in the face of new and outside influences, whether or not local artists had already derived inspiration from Mughal (or even Deccani) art, and so on, all of which contributed to the great diversity of eighteenth-century Indian painting.[203] Typical of eighteenth-century political and economic trends, powerful merchants occasionally commissioned artworks in the developing regional

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art, and its diversity, even as a distinguishable style and set of genres came into being, see: Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, which is a good guide despite its flaws and lofty dismissal of certain traditions and developments.

[199] Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 117–28, 157–63, for a survey of this phase focussing on the Hindu Rajput states. See, also: Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 96–105, for examples and analysis.

[200] The Amber rajas, for instance, even possessed early Mughal pictures; see: Venkateswaran and Tillotson, eds., *Masterpieces*, 26–27. There were even important and prized collections of Mughal images as far south as Arcot: Eaton, 'Colonial Despotism', 68–70; Ehrlich, 'Plunder and Prestige', here especially 478–79.

[201] For examples of such mobility, see: Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 11, 146.

[202] See, for a fast-paced, illustrated survey: Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 174–204.

[203] For a concise, comparative visual survey, see: Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 110–45.

styles as they sought to participate in the cultural scene and thereby pursue their gentlemanly self-fashioning.[204]

Perhaps most exquisite of all the regional traditions is that of the small states in the Himalayan foothills, this locale giving them the name ‘Pahari’. Though not isolated, with some of its rulers even in imperial service, nature and the terrain meant it was (culturally) distant from the Mughal centre, so that whatever art was produced there before the late seventeenth century was closer to certain Rajput styles.[205] The location also made for ‘a wild and dramatic setting’ of snow-capped ‘mountains, roaring torrents, and secluded, fertile valleys’ that ‘certainly inspired local artists to create some of the most powerful and expressive landscapes in Indian painting.’[206] Take, for example, ‘The South Wind Cools Itself in the Snows of the Himalayas’ (c. 1765–70).[207] It was produced as one of a series of illustrations of Jayadeva’s *Gitagovinda*, in this case to illustrate the following Sanskrit verse:

> Winds from the sandalwood mountains blow now towards Himalayan peaks,
> Longing to plunge in the snows after weeks of writhing in the hot bellies of ground snakes.
> Melodious voices of cuckoos raise their joyful sound
> When they spy the buds on tips of smooth mango branches[208]

The artist, almost proto-Romantic in his celebration of the sublime, interprets the verse quite literally, which comes at the end of a canto about Radha and Krishna’s consummation of their marriage, about erotic longing, and, ultimately, about the soft and amorous, cool south wind. More generally, the incorporation of the landscape of a king’s domains and his monuments, forts, palaces, and kinsmen was one of the most common ways artists localised pictures for Indian patrons – from devotional scenes to the kinds of images drawn from Mughal genres (e.g., hunting scenes, but even portraits). Thus, for instance, Vrindavan was vernacularised as it was relocated to Rajasthan in some Krishna paintings for Vaishnava Rajput rulers, yet the Pahari example just described is quite stunning precisely because of the uniqueness of the Himalayan environment.[209]

In smaller states, like those of the Pahari region, family workshops held sway over court ateliers; this helped create distinctive styles across several generations, although artists did travel to other kingdoms, hungry for patronage (and fresh inspiration).[210] It was through this system that one of the most outstanding artists of the age, in the hill states or elsewhere, came to his profession: Nainsukh (active c. 1735–78). Unlike his father, Pandit Seu, Nainsukh more freely incorporated elements of the imperial style while maintaining much of what was distinctive of the Pahari style learnt in the family workshop in Guler. Under the patronage of Balwant Singh – the ruler of Jasrota, where he arrived c. 1740 – Nainsukh produced some of his finest work.[211] In one *darbar* portrait of the ruler, Nainsukh even inserts himself into the scene, for he stands on a horizontal plane behind Balwant Singh (who faces a group of musicians) while the maharaja inspects a picture the artist has just completed.[212] Now in the British Museum collection is an even more compositionally striking picture: Nainsukh's 'Trumpeters' (Fig. 9G). Purchased by the British artist, Winifred Nicholson (1893–1981), during her time in India, it is one of several Indian pictures that influenced her understanding of light and colour, exemplifying how artists took inspiration from Indian miniatures long after they had been painted.[213] Painted early in his career, c. 1735–40, Nainsukh shows an understated, stylishly offset group of seven players of the *turhi*, a Pahari instrument, with each musician rendered individually, their bodies twisted dynamically in a way that brings the scene (a celebration of marriage? – or of a birth?) to life.

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[204] Such images are rare, but a portrait dated 1823 of a wealthy merchant, Seth Manekchand, appropriates the *jharokha* portrait (an imperial genre that had become a mainstay of Rajput art), demonstrating the sitter’s aspirations; see: Crill and Jariwala, *Indian Portrait*, 132–33.

[205] Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting*, 168–72.

[206] Ibid, 168.

[207] This is reproduced in the freely downloadable catalogue, Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, on 155, and even more lavishly in Losty, ed., *Pahari Paintings*, 137–39.

[208] Translated and cited in Losty, ed., *Pahari Paintings*, 137.

[209] Aitken, *Tradition*, 242–52, on the conflation of ruler with deity and the nesting of the kingdom within Krishna’s world (and vice versa).

9.3.3 Music

Today, Indian classical music denotes the north Indian 'Hindustani' and south Indian 'Karnatak' traditions. A crucial phase in the process of classicisation occurred under colonialism and in response to modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sometimes involving quite new genres assuming an air of antiquity as they folded into these two traditions. An earlier phase of classicisation took place in the pre-colonial period, however, which was vitally important to the distinction of a core set of genres like *dhrupad* and *khayal* and their categorisation as art-music or elite music – or what we today call classical music. The Mughal court, Katherine Butler Schofield demonstrates, played a key part in the canonisation and systemisation of certain kinds of music that was part and parcel of this earlier phase of classicisation.[214]

Musicological scholarship was in no way a Mughal invention: despite ever-shifting differences between practice (*prayoga*) and idealised theory (*shastra*), writing on music in Sanskrit had come into being over a millennia prior to – and remained extant at the time of – the Mughal conquest. Such writings were known as *sangita shastras*; they were held as authoritative by contemporary

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[210] Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 148.

[211] Goswamy, *Nainsukh*, remains the standard reference on the artist's life and output.

[212] Guy and Britschgi, *Master Painters*, 162.

[213] See: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_2019–3004–1 [accessed 22 July 2022]

[214] Schofield, 'Classicization'.

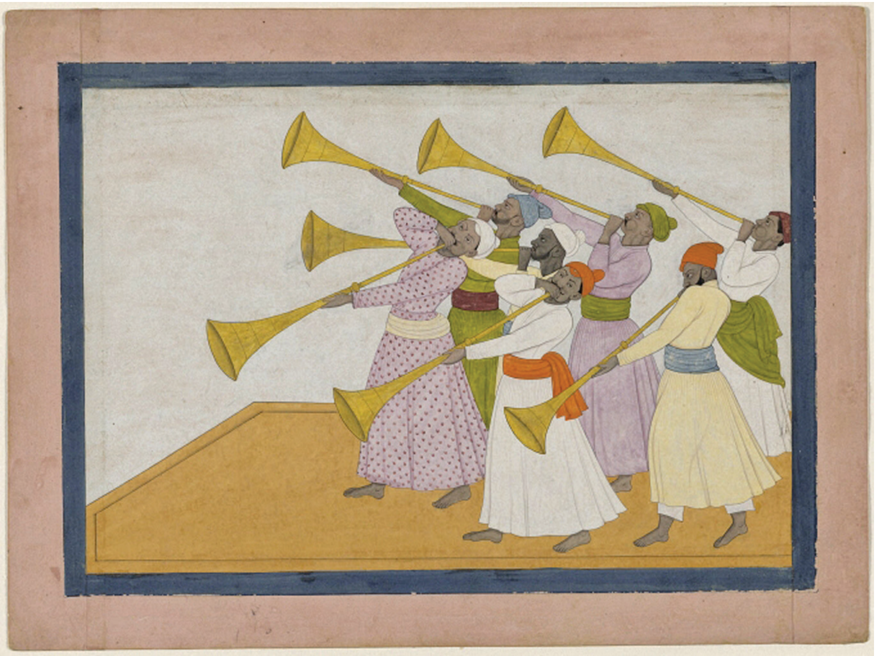

Fig. 9G Trumpeters (watercolour; by Nainsukh in Jasrota; c.1735-40), 2019,3004.1. © The Trustees of the British Museum

practitioners and patrons. Typical of the exchanges between language-cum-knowledge ecumenes already described, these 'had percolated into Persian, Brajbhasha, and other vernacular languages' by the seventeenth century.[215] In Persian, musicological texts were known as *ilm-i musiqi*, belonging to a genre of considerable pedigree in the Arabo-Persian world in its own right.[216] Interestingly, the production of Braj musicological treatises was entailed upon Braj's emulation of Sanskrit, while the Mughals' patronage of Braj afforded such texts a role in the classicisation of Hindustani music, thus closely linking language or literary classicisation with that in the realm of music.[217]

The Mughal elite were not pioneers, therefore, nor were they unprecedented, for the Tomar court at Gwalior had been the preeminent centre of musical patronage and refinement until its usurpation by the imperial court in the late sixteenth century.[218] Rather, the Mughals worked *with* established musical traditions and practitioners – as they did in the arts and architecture – to make their lasting contribution. Their major role was to patronise Hindustani music and 'sponsor, collect, circulate, and in some cases personally write detailed treatises on its theory and practice.'[219] Among their aims was to foster connoisseurship, for being a good listener at a *mehfil* or other musical event was as important as the musicians being good players. On the performers' part, the proper rendition of a *raga* would produce a particular *rasa*. Indian *ragas* or melodies were based on a progression of five to seven notes, each associated with a particular scale, and each associated with a particular mood.[220] Indian aesthetic theory defined nine *rasas* or distilled essences: the erotic, experienced as desire; the tragic = grief; comic = amusement; violent = anger; heroic = determination; fearful = fear; macabre = revulsion; fantastic = amazement; and peaceful = tranquillity.[221] On the audience's part, knowledge of the finer or esoteric points of musical performance were necessary for the *rasa* to be 'savoured'. In 'the transient moment of performance', therefore, the skilled musician temporarily produces the *rasa* to at once be 'savoured' by the listening connoisseur (*rasika*); the one cannot succeed without the other.[222] In paintings from the Bundi and Kota courts of Rajasthan, the ruler-cum-connoisseur is the performer, as in the *ragamala* painting depicted in Fig. 9H.

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[215] Ibid, here 492.

[216] See, for further details: ibid, 497–98.

[217] See, for instance: Williams, 'Reflecting'.

[218] Williams, 'Singing', 181. See, also: Orsini and Butler Schofield, eds., *Tellings and Texts*, 12–15, on prior, and parallel developments at other, non- or pre-Mughal courts.

More influential still than discussion of the *rasas* found in Sanskrit aesthetics, however, was the *ragamala* tradition of painting, which flourished from the second half of the fifteenth century. In a *ragamala* picture, painting was imbricated with poetry, and perhaps a musical performance, too, if the artwork was used that way. It brought to life one of the thirty-six melodies, based on the notion of six male *ragas* each with five wives (*raginis*), thus giving rise to thirty-six permutations each with their respective affective states.[223] These paintings of 'heroes, heroines, semi-divine beings, and deities in standardised but vivid and complex emotional scenarios' served as 'richly layered icons'.[224] They had a huge impact on 'Mughal understandings of the correct emotional effect of each *raga*', because they allowed for 'a more expansive range of emotional shades connected with key *rasas* to be enjoyed through musical listening' than the nine *rasas* alone.[225] Such complex understandings had another effect; namely, to incorporate music within Sufi and Greco-Islamicate ideas about emotions, the mind and body, and health and medicine (§10.2). Mughal treatises sought to explain which *ragas* produced which effects and why. Music held the power 'to arouse desire, compassion, sorrow, joy, vigour, tranquillity,

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[219] Schofield, 'Classicization', 495, where it was noted that this was a male preserve, exercised via participation in all-male social spaces.

[220] See: Dallapiccola *et al*, *Ragamala Painting*, especially 13–22, for a very digestible guide to *raga* music and *ragamala* painting.

[221] Schofield, 'Emotions', 186, which is the source of this pithy set of taxonomical approximations.

[222] Ibid, 186.

[223] For a visual and descriptive guide, see: Dallapiccola *et al*, *Ragamala Painting*.

[224] Schofield, 'Emotions', 187.

[225] Ibid, 187.

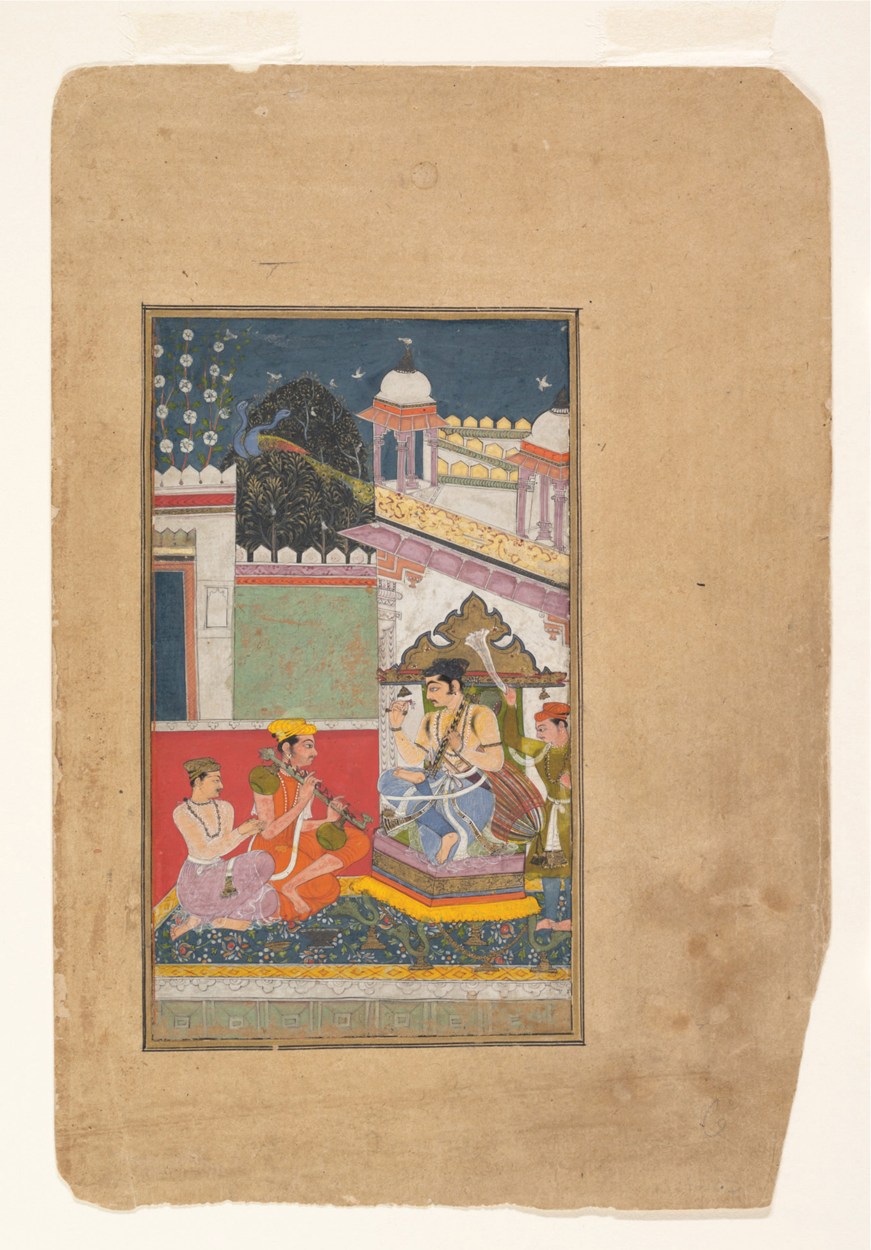

Fig. 9H Shri Raga, from a *Ragamala* Series (ink and watercolour; unknown artist from Bundi; mid-seventeenth century)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1981.163

etc, in the individual listener – or to bring the rain, defeat enemies, light fires, bestow sovereignty, or calm wild beasts'; listening to the right *raga* could help bring the body, the empire, or the universe back into equilibrium and thus into rude health.[226] Writing in 1666, Saif Khan (aka. Faqirullah) declared in his Persian treatise on Hindustani music that: 'to arouse tender sympathy in the heart is music's entire essence, and its result.'[227]

At the same time, such treatises were 'written to correct, canonize, and preserve a tiny handful of India's vast array of musical practices and styles', Schofield notes, 'and to protect them from the current unenlightened depredations of their professional practitioners.'[228] The kind of music upon which they fixed were those rooted in the *ragas* (melodic modes) and carried by certain *talas* (rhythmic cycles, akin to metres). These songs and instrumental forms (on the *rudra vina*, *rabab*, *sitar*, and *tabla*, for instance) were performed by hereditary communities of professionals (*kalawants*, *qawwals*).[229] Such music and its underpinning concepts were of long-standing, but practitioners had purportedly lost their knowledge of the science of music down the generations, causing its perceived degeneration. This necessitated the realignment of Hindustani practice with Sanskrit discourse or else with performance practice in the south, which was held to be closer to the authentic, antique, or 'classical' tradition as found in texts. Thus, musicological treatises at once educated while they also standardised and gave form and content to the musical cannon.

All this had come into being by the mid-seventeenth century, thanks to imperial patrons like Shah Jahan, who commissioned an anthology of *dhrupad* lyrics, the *Sahasras*, as well as numerous sub-imperial ones, too. Against the view that Aurangzeb banned music, Schofield highlights the vibrancy of musical culture, patronage, and performance in the later seventeenth century and its role in bonding the Mughal elite.[230] As the boundaries of the empire subsequently declined, so – as with other arts – opportunities for musicians and musicologists were dispersed.[231] This was reflected as much in musical performance as in *ragamala* painting within the regional courts or the translation of key musicological works into regional vernaculars, although it should be noted that the origins of vernacular connoisseurship pre-dated Mughal interventions.[232]

The early seventeenth-century Sanskrit work by Damodara, the *Sangitadarpana* ('Mirror of Music'), was especially influential. It digested work of several centuries prior with reference to other musical treatises, making it a valuable navigational aid; hence, its influence on Faquirullah's Persian musicology. Probably not long after it made its appearance, Damodara's text was translated into Braj by Harivallabha, who did not merely render the Sanskrit in a different language, but reworked it for a Braj audience and their sensibilities. Harivallabha's *Sangitadarpana* exists today in multiple recensions, some with commentaries, some with *ragamala* illustrations, some found as far afield as Bengal and Punjab – and these texts certainly circulated widely – all reflecting the growing range of audiences and purposes.[233] Having said that, the Mughal centre was rivalled by the cultural production of the Deccani courts, while intellectuals in different regions seem to have favoured particular texts, placing limitations on how far texts circulated or created impact.[234]

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[226] Ibid, 188. See, also: Schofield, 'Hindustani Music', 177–225.

[227] Translated and cited in: Schofield, 'Emotions', 183.

[228] Schofield, 'Classicization', 496.

[229] Schofield, 'Emotions', 183.

[230] Schofield, 'Hindustani Music'.

[231] This is likely to be examined more fully in Schofield's forthcoming monograph.

[232] Dallapiccola *et al*, *Ragamala Painting*; Williams, 'Singing', 181.

What does all this represent? On the one hand, the kind of music played in Mughal elite or courtly (*darbari*) settings and theorised in musicological treatises patronised or penned and circulated by Mughal gentlefolk laid the foundations for a musical high culture at large – Hindustani classical music. This high culture was embraced from the late seventeenth century in Punjab and at the Lahore *darbar* of the Sikh maharaja, Ranjit Singh, much as it was at other successor state courts across north India.[235] On the other hand, the ideas regarding the relationship of the classical to the modern and the elevated to the folk underpinning this classicisation of *certain* musical styles and practices were by their very nature exclusivist. According to Sanskrit treatises, *marga* (the universal way) lay above *desi* (the local place), which informed the structuring of Sanskrit above local languages, as we have seen.[236] As imperial musicology developed over the seventeenth century, *marga* came to take on multiple meanings – 'not just divinity and universality' and that related to Sanskrit, but also associations 'with age and antiquity, with authenticity and authority, and with music aligned with theory.'[237] *Desi*, by contrast, 'became associated with the familiar local context of the north, with the current practice of musicians, and with modernity and newness.'[238] *Desi* meant the vernacular, the new-fangled, and the degenerate.

But this did not entail that musical high culture was a fortress, inaccessible to outsiders and ever-vigilant of unwanted external influences. One avenue into a richer understanding of the relationship of courtly Hindustani music to other venues and styles is to return to the fact that musicology was a growing field with an ever-wider audience, comprising not only courtiers but also religious leaders and merchants.[239] Take, for instance, Narottama Dasa

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[233] See, valuably: Williams, 'Reflecting'.

[234] Williams, 'Singing', 190. For a Deccani, illustrated *ragamala* manuscript in Persian, see: Victoria and Albert Museum, London, *Miftah al-Sarod* (1691), IS 61:1–1977.

[235] Kapuria, 'Music', here 660.

[236] Schofield, 'Classicization', 491.

[237] Ibid, 500.

[238] Ibid, 500.

[239] Williams, 'Reflecting', 97.

(d. c.1611). He was a Vaishnava devotee of the Gaudiya *sampradaya* (§2.1.1) and lived in Vrindavan in the late sixteenth century, where he was exposed to Hindustani art-music. His contribution, it is said, was to combine musical poetry or lyrics and local musical tastes with *raga*-based art-music in ways, moreover, that aligned it with what was going on in the Mughal heartland.[240] Notwithstanding that some of the details come from later hagiographies whose authors were soaked in musicology and thus apt to use its terminology to describe Naromatta Dasa's contributions, while also blurring his endeavours with those of other Vaishnava devotees engaging with musicological treatises and ideas, the result was to classicise *kirtan* (or, should we say, to vernacularise musical high culture?).[241] This was not a wholescale transformation, of course. There were aspects of *bhakti kirtan* that were at odds with art-music: standing (rather than sitting) and its impact on the music, a dynamic and unbridled emotive energy (rather than its careful control), the playing of instruments not used in courtly settings, and so forth.[242]

Nevertheless, as devotees like Naromatta Dasa sought ways of embedding the principles of art-music into religious practice to harness the power of sound, they critically and innovatively engaged with Sanskrit musicology around the same time as the Mughals – that is, from around the late sixteenth century. Among those who later described these developments were Narahari Chakravarti, a Bengali who settled in Vrindavan in the early eighteenth century and who had studied music in Delhi, Mathura, and Vrindavan under the guidance of both Hindu gurus and Muslim *ustads*.[243] Alongside his hagiographies, he penned a practical and theoretical guide for singers, a song anthology in Sanskrit and Bengali, and a compendium of musicological treatises.[244] Across this body of work, his professed aim was, Richard Williams argues, 'to be educating singers within the *sampradaya* community, by distilling useful music theory and embedding it in a *vaishnava* frame of reference'; thus, for instance, one of his major works 'begins with a specifically *vaishnava* explanation of the origins of musical sound (16,000 *raga*s arising from Krishna's playing the flute, and the *gopi*s' singing)' before situating Sanskrit theory within that cosmology.[245]

How was this possible and why was it significant? Williams reminds us that 'musicians and scholars of music developed repertoires, systems of aesthetics, and performance practices that resonated in both temple and courtly settings', for they circulated within the interleaved worlds forged by Mughal imperial infrastructure and by religious institutions, as Narahari

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[240] Williams, 'Singing', 182.

[241] Ibid, 183.

[242] Ibid, 183–84, where the distinctiveness of Gaudiya intellectuals – from the wider *bhakti* field – in engaging with such non-sectarian musicological works is also outlined.

[243] Ibid, 182.

[244] Ibid, 186.

[245] Ibid, 187.

Chakravarti's career shows. Williams also notes that religious and royal settings 'were drawn into close proximity', for 'when *vaishnava* deities and their priestly custodians became associated with specific rulers, sacred and royal ritual practices could converge.'[246] Such was the impact of Vaishnava musicologists in seventeenth-century Odisha, for example, while it should be noted that Vaishnava temple music and dance had also made their way into Persianate courts for the purposes of entertainment by the eighteenth century.[247] Scientific thought at large, as we shall see in the next chapter, likewise proved difficult to contain within classical languages, courtly settings, and imperial networks.

9.4 Conclusion

Over the long-term, Brahmanisation and the spread of Bhakti movements spurred horizontal standardisation, even as they spread notions of caste and hence the emergence of those caste-based hierarchies that led to greater vertical stratification.[248] On the one hand, cultural standardisation worked with state expansion and administrative centralisation to produce a sequence of ever more well-integrated states in the millennium to c. 1800. On the other hand, vernacularisation was a stronger tide and regionalism a greater tendency in south Asia than contemporary Burma, Siam, France, Russia, or Japan, not to mention China, as Victor Lieberman argues.[249] India was not only multilingual and multi-scriptual, but experienced what has been described as a 'hybrid, restless, multilingual ferment' after Timur left, with a deepening of vernacular culture sometimes working in opposition to cultural standardisation and political integration.[250] Impressively centralised though they were, early modern Indian states – even the Mughal state – were less stable and durable as a result.[251]

By the early eighteenth century, the Mughal state – the most geographically expansive state on the Indian subcontinent in several centuries – was giving way to myriad successor states. But this reversion to polycentrism went hand-in-hand with something novel: the emergence of what C.A. Bayly termed regional 'patriotisms', which he defined not as something primordial, but as describing

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[246] Ibid, 180.

[247] Ibid, 190; Hodgson, *Venture*, 145.

[248] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii, 659–78, where the parallel role of Islam and 'Perso-Islamic' culture is also considered.

[249] Ibid, especially 724–33.

[250] Orsini and Sheikh, 'Introduction', 2, for citation. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. i, especially 38–39, 187–97, 292, sets out the tension between localism versus trans-localism and pluralism, vernacularisation and cosmopolitanism, cultural fissure and what he calls 'standardisation'. *C.f.* Eaton, *Persianate Age*, 133–38.

[251] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii, 631–732, for the analysis of south Asia within the framework of his larger thesis.

'the sense of loyalty to place and institutions which bound some Indians […] to their regional homelands.'[252] These, he argued, created the Indian 'public sphere' within which the later Indian nationalist movement could take root.[253] Another, somewhat contrary effect was typical of the push-and-pull of the forces making for standardisation or difference, of the tension of the vernacular or local vis-à-vis the cosmopolitan and larger regional or 'national' frames. As the patriotisms of the eighteenth century were articulated through regional languages and cultures, so there came a push for political reorganisation along linguistic lines that began in the late colonial period and continues today. Some politicians resisted dividing the newly independent nation into language areas after 1947. Others, however, viewed the connection of language with community or place as fundamental to representative democracy. From the cleavage of a Hindi (dialect)-speaking area from Punjab to form Haryana in 1966, to the separation of a majority Telugu-speaking area from Andhra Pradesh to form Telangana in 2014, a series of linguistic states have acquired their place within India's federal union.

Thus, if they could be derided as mere patois by Sanskrit intellectuals before the dawn of early modernity, the same was not the case by the end of the period, for *deshabhashas* were firmly established as languages of intellectual and cultural production and fast becoming vehicles of political expression. There were many kinds of vernacularisation, of local ways of making culture: from below, but also in dialogue with elite or cosmopolitan tongues and traditions, themselves steadily evolving; through the emulation of high registers or high styles, but also in competition with them; via performance and oral-aural transmission, but also through literisation and literary production; thanks to the lavish patronage of the king or his courtiers, but also without such largesse. For its part, the state was not always the most important agent of vernacularisation in south Asia, compared to, say, France or Poland, where the state vitally aided the spread of French and Polish by making them the official languages of administration (in 1539, in both cases).[254]

Indian rulers, like those anywhere in the world, were guided by what they discerned as their priorities and yet limited by their own predispositions or prejudices. The Mughals chose to operate in Persian for good reason, yet also supported the production of Braj works, even as they largely ignored other languages. The lasting impact of the Jesuits at the Mughal court was as transmitters of art and the religious iconography described above, whereas in China they additionally played a key role in transmitting scientific and mathematical ideas then circulating in Europe, a fact that reflects the very different concerns of particular rulers as much as differences in intellectual life at their courts and within their kingdoms.[255] Knowledge, and especially what is commonly called 'science', is the subject of the next chapter, which inevitably returns not only to the vernacularisation of scientific thought in south Asia, but also considers its limits.

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[252] Bayly, *Origins*, v, for citation, and 20–49.

[253] See: Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 180–211.

[254] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii, 261–64; Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 226.

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[255] Koch, 'Being Like Jesus and Mary', 199, for this observation. Flowers, 'Scientific Knowledge', reviews the impact of the Jesuits on science at the Qing court while surveying the contexts, priorities, and development of scientific knowledge in the imperial court, among Chinese intellectuals, and in society at large.

10 Knowledge

Shortly after the Mughal conquest of the Deccan, an unknown artist in Aurangabad – versed in the conventions of Deccani as well as Mughal and Rajput painting – set about his work. Someone of wealth had commissioned a copy of a work by the polymath, Muhammad Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, a.k.a. Shaikh Baha'i (1547–1621), a man who had served as the highest officer on religious and juridical matters in the Safavid Empire before travelling and continuing his writing in the fields of theology and philosophy, mathematics and astronomy, architecture and poetry. It was Shaikh Baha'i's *masnavi* entitled *Nan va Halva* ('Bread and Sweets') that our unknown artist was illuminating for his Indian patron. In the manuscript copy upon which the artist worked, the Arabic preface appeared in black ink, with Persian interlinear translation in red, while the poem itself appears in Persian in black, with Arabic headings in gold.

Surviving as perhaps the only illustrated version of *Nan va Halva*, the artist went well beyond outlining the text with golden clouds and flowering plants, with borders featuring rocky landscapes populated with fantastical birds and animals. Although not lending itself to illumination, he must have found some of the author's parables highly amusing, for he produced four full-leaf and incredibly witty paintings to illustrate parts of the text. A school where only the sciences are taught is the subject of the picture accompanying the chapter on the regrets of a life spent learning things of no use on the day of resurrection (Fig. 10A). In the top right, we see an elderly teacher, book in hand. Around him, one student is in such a state of stupor from drinking that his turban has fallen from his head, while another (a Sufi, bottom left) is dozing, and another still (a yogi, bottom right) prefers to 'meditate'.

Thinking about this picture, the text it was illuminating, and the context to its circulation and reproduction is germane to the themes of this chapter. What kind of school is this, where we find such a motley group of students? How, in fact, did one acquire a formal education in early modern India? In what venues and what languages did learning take place? How did knowledge travel and circulate? How was it translated as it moved across boundaries erected by culture, language, local traditions? And what was the relationship of 'science' and 'religion'? Animated by these concerns, this chapter begins by identifying who literate people were and

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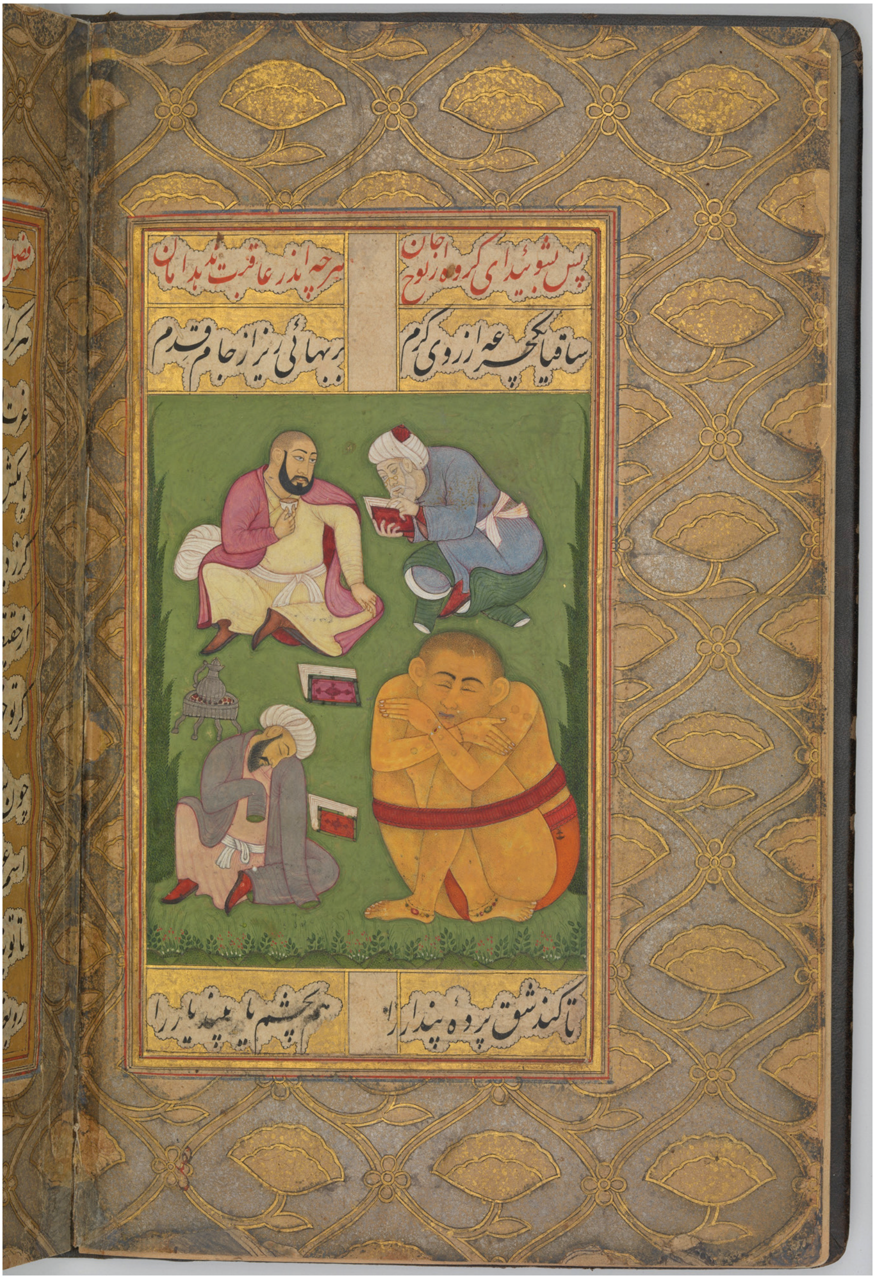
هر چه اندر عاقبت ندهد امان
ساقیا یکجرعه از روی کرم
بر بهائی ریز از جام قدم
تا کند شق پرده پندار را
هم بچشم یار بیند یار را

Fig. 10A A School of the Sciences, from a Manuscript of *Nan va Halva* by Muhammad Baha'al-Din al-'Amili (watercolour, gold, and inks; unknown artist in Aurangabad; c. 1690)

Courtesy: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, United States, 1999.157

how they acquired literacy and an education, before examining some of the larger impacts of this learning, including the formation of the self and the critical self-awareness of one's role in intellectual or other kinds of labour. The larger part of this chapter concerns the forms of knowledge extant in the early modern world, which is, both by necessity and by design, a selective survey.

Poking fun at the sciences, Fig. 10A seems to allude – quite knowingly – to what historians have called useful knowledge, the presence or supposed absence of which they have placed at the centre of explanations about the Great Divergence.[1] Some modes or forms of knowledge (*ilm*) have been encountered in the preceding chapters, from other-worldly wisdom to alchemy, from urban ethnography and travel writing to literary science and musicology.[2] Some merit more attention than can be granted in the present chapter, while others are represented by still-nascent fields of scholarly inquiry. Take, for instance, comparative philology, long and widely presumed to have come into being through the energies of such Western intellectuals as the eighteenth-century Company Orientalist, Sir William Jones (1756–94). This 'science of language' was developing in the Indo-Persianate ecumene long before Jones' arrival on the scene; in fact, he relied to an extent on the insights and findings of those Indo-Persian thinkers who scooped Jones' supposed discoveries, even if this fact has largely been forgotten because so few contemporaries were equipped to establish the degree of Jones' originality. This having been established, it is now for historians to study the achievements and early modern culture of inquiry (Humanism, if you will) among non-Western thinkers, as Rajiv Kinra has set out to do.[3]

A separate problem relates to numerous forms of knowledge remaining embodied and transmitted orally-aurally and thus fairly mysterious in the context of early modern India. Add to this secret knowledge, such as intelligence. The artist of Elizabeth I's famous 'Rainbow Portrait' may have pictorialised the message '*non sine sole iris*' ('no rainbow without the sun') by showing her holding a rainbow, the queen being the sun by implication, but he also painted eyes and ears camouflaged in the folds of her gown. These variously reminded onlookers of the queen's wisdom in matters of both heart and mind, or that the Elizabethan peace resided in the work of her spies, such as Francis Walsingham (d. 1590), and their command over the world of whispers and shadows – yet, by the same token, declared defiance of her sovereignty as a hopeless cause.[4] Of informants and political intelligence much before the colonial transition in south Asia – let alone in the time of Elizabeth's Mughal contemporaries, such as Akbar – we know little, however, especially when compared to recent findings on early modern Ottoman information networks.[5] A final issue concerns the tying of particular communities of knowledgeable people to intellectual production in particular registers. The outcome was the fracturing of whole disciplines (and their historiographies), although evidence of cross-fertilisation between Sanskrit and Persianate learning, for instance, is discernible as an early modern development.

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[1] Parthasarathi, *Asia*, especially 185–222 on useful knowledge in pre-colonial India, responding to ideas forwarded, most especially, by Joel Mokyr concerning the causes of 'Industrial Enlightenment' in Britain first and foremost, rather than other parts of the world. For criticisms of Mokyr's work: Clark, 'Review Essay', especially 90–93.

[2] Aside from kingly interest in alchemy in various locales around the globe, which we have already encountered, we might note the pivotal role of religious groups, such as the Naths, in the context of early modern India; see: Ramos, *Tantra*, 81.

[3] Kinra, 'Comparative Philology', which is the source of this discussion. See, also: Kinra, 'Noble Science'.

[4] The portrait now hangs at Hatfield House, outside London. See: Strong, *Gloriana*, 31, 156–61. For a different reading of the picture: Dimmock, *Elizabethan Globalism*, 103–27.

Against this, the present survey encompasses those knowledges that helped make sense of one's position in space (i.e., the geographic, navigational, and cartographic) and those which helped maintain one's place in the passage of time (i.e., mathematics, horology, and the astral sciences), while also broaching botany and medicine. These were also active intellectual fields in other parts of the world. Two wider issues arise from comparison. In the first place, India and Indians played an important part in networks of scientific knowledge production, some of long-standing (e.g., those directed toward Iran and central Asia), others more recently revivified due to new forms of connectivity (e.g., links to Europe), but they seldom did so merely passively; Indians actively collaborated with intellectuals across the subcontinent or from faraway places, while taking an interest in new ideas developed elsewhere. The second issue concerns the relationship of knowledge communities and 'scientific' institutions with the state. On the one hand, scientific activity and learning – expressed in cosmopolitan registers, while also being vernacularised – was enclaved by language and community, yet fairly free from political intervention or interference. On the other hand, science was not steadily yoked in south Asia to the interests of the state and to national progress, as it was in other parts of the world, with important implications for the organisation and ideology of the scientific community on the eve of colonialism.

10.1 Literacy and Learning

Under the wooden sign showing two golden compasses, not far from the docks along the Scheldt and under the shadow of Antwerp's towering cathedral, was the townhouse with its printing workshops and saleroom founded in the mid-sixteenth century by Christophe Plantin (d. 1589). Trained as a bookbinder, he relocated from Paris to the Low Countries.[6] Before seventeenth-century Amsterdam, with its global trade that made the port-city a cosmopolitan place, there was sixteenth-century Antwerp, then the north's leading port, the locus of the first financialisation of the early modern world economy, and home to a great number of ‘outlanders’ (foreigners) – making it the perfect place for exiles and Protestant ‘heretics’ to hide in plain sight.[7] Because it was such a place of commercial exchange and human traffic, it was also the ideal location for a wide-reaching, cutting-edge publishing venture.

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[5] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 10–96, on later eighteenth-century India; Ghobrial, *Whispers of Cities*, on late seventeenth-century Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

[6] The availability of artistic talent was one motive (stated by Plantin in a letter explaining his move), but religious and political convictions were another; Chipps Smith, *Netherlandish Renaissance*, 402.

On the distribution side of things, Plantin had the good fortune to be awarded a monopoly granted by the Papacy for the supply of liturgical texts, the patronage of Philip II of Spain, representation at the renowned Frankfurt Book Fair, and a ready market around Europe, not least across the channel, in England. On the commissioning side, Plantin was shrewd to realise challenging projects and cultivate men of great learning, such as Abraham Ortelius (1527–98), the geographer and cartographer who was born and died in Antwerp and produced the first modern atlas; the Flemish doctor and botanist, Carolus Clusius (1526–1609); and the Italian merchant-turned-urban ethnographer of Antwerp, Lodovico Guicciardini (1521–89). Aside from these and other learned figures, Plantin’s intellectual network encompassed those possessing religious learning and knowledge of languages; hence, he was able to publish one of the most ambitious and famous works, the Polyglot Bible, with its parallel texts in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac, a copy of which even made its way to the Mughal court, as we have seen. The house would later go on to print Arabic dictionaries and grammars, too.[8]

What is revealed by this case study of Plantin’s business? At the grandest scale, it shows us the impact of early modern globalisation upon knowledge production. Plantin’s networks ranged from the immediately local and often quite city-centric to those continental in scope, but his contacts – many of whom we shall return to in this chapter – also relied on correspondence networks stretching around the globe. Plantin’s fortunes were imbricated within those of his friends and contacts, and vice versa, just as aspects of his production and distribution of books were interleaved in the life of the city, its politics, and its global trade. Although the printing press had been around since the invention of moveable type in the previous century, the production of printed books began to take off in the sixteenth century. We can only speculate about the precise aetiological impact of the age of discoveries upon this acceleration. What the rise of print in Europe does urgently raise, however, is the issue of how knowledge was transmitted, how (and how far) it circulated, and how it was received, both in places impacted by moveable type and those that were not, such as early modern India.[9]

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[7] It was Antwerp’s ‘beurs’ that gave us the ‘bourse’ – which was virtually ‘plagiarised’, as Pye puts it, in the form of the English stock exchange – as well as being pivotal to the creation of money markets. The city was so commercialised that the attic of the *beurs* was the site of an art market, for art had become a commodity bought and sold on the open market, too. Pye, *Antwerp*, 116–39. See, also: Prak, *Dutch Republic*, 87–150, for the larger economic picture of Antwerp and Amsterdam. To envision ‘Golden Age’ Amsterdam’s cosmopolitanism, consider: Kolfin and Runia, *Black in Rembrandt’s Time*.

[8] These were the work of Franciscus Raphelengius (who had collaborated on the Polyglot Bible), his sons, and Thomas Erpenius. See: Hamilton, *Arab and Arabists*, here especially 259–68, and *passim*, for essays revealing how ‘global’ and interwoven were learning, knowledge production, and messianic thought in the early modern world. See, also: §3.3.4–§3.3.5.

A print revolution did not take place in south Asia until the nineteenth century.[10] To be sure, there were challenges to the utilisation of moveable type by users of (cursive) non-European languages (e.g., Persian, Sanskrit, Braj, Punjabi, etc), although Plantin's printing of Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic texts shows that this was not insurmountable.[11] There were also good reasons for keeping works in manuscript rather than printed form (e.g. secrecy, not wanting or needing to reach a general audience, etc), to the extent that we must acknowledge the limits and even the resistance to print not only in Asia but also in Europe, not only several centuries ago but even today.[12] As for the reasons for print not taking off in India before c. 1800, these are not especially relevant, save to note the problems of culturalist interpretations that speak of an aversion to print outside Europe/Christendom.[13]

In this connection, we might briefly note the printing house set up in 1726 by Ibrahim Müteferrika in the Ottoman Empire. It may only have endured piecemeal after his death in 1746/7, but it was hardly a failure when sales and circulation are placed in comparative context – both in terms of the Ottoman market and against figures relating to early printing ventures in Europe. It did not stimulate a print revolution, which only occurred in the next century, but Müteferrika was an 'agent of evolution', Orlin Sabev argues, smoothing the way from a scribal-manuscript culture to one based on print.[14] In early modern India, too, manuscript-scribal cultures of various sorts (e.g., those based on palm leaf) were the basis of the communication of ideas and of lower- and higher-level learning, themselves transformed by the introduction of paper and the different kind of manuscript-scribal culture it engendered.[15] Before delving into the forms of knowledge and fields of inquiry cultivated by the early moderns, it is worth pausing to consider how the early moderns acquired literacy and thereby accessed higher learning, if at all. Because, as we shall see, certain knowledge traditions were tied to particular languages, our immediate concern is with what can be called a 'general education' in early modern India's lingua franca (Persian) and in vernaculars.

Percolating from royal courts into society at large since the arrival of the first of the Delhi Sultans – a few poetic or historical manuscripts here, a flurry of workaday loan words there – Persian was only declared *the* language of Mughal administration during Akbar's reign.[16] Indeed, the Mughals did not embrace Persian immediately (§9.1); Babur wrote his memoirs in his native Chaghtai Turkish, for example, which was also the first language of his son and successor. The adoption of Persian is all the more curious given the scope and extent of its usage, especially when set against other north Indian languages (§9.2). True, it was well-established as the register of the Muslim elite. That said, it was not so important to the Mughals' predecessors, while Hindavi was on the rise and received some praise from Muslim commentators as a register.[17] Thus, as Muzaffar Alam plainly states, any explanation of Persian's rise must 'be sought more in the convergence of factors within the Mughal regime than in the Indo-Persian heritage of the earlier Muslim regimes.'[18] The precise causes are murky, but one factor was surely the arrival of successive waves of talented writers, scholars, and artisans from Iran following Humayun's return to India and the reconquest that began his second reign.[19] A turning point came in Akbar's reign, when Persian 'emerged as *the language* of the king, the royal household and the high Mughal elite', as well as of the administration, once the latter had been reorganised by the Iranian émigré Mir Fathallah Shirazi, under whom worked a cadre of talented Iranian clerks.[20]

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[9] Actually, the printing press was introduced by Jesuit missionaries in 1556, but was neither much used nor made much of a wider impact: Mattausch, 'Printing Press', 59.

[10] See: §2.5.3.

[11] Mattausch, 'Printing Press', 65–68, for details of an (unsuccessful) Gujarati initiative.

[12] Wooding, *Tudor England*, 320.

[13] *C.f.* Mattausch, 'Printing Press', 68–78.

[14] Sabev, 'Ottoman Turkish Printing'.

[15] O'Hanlon, 'Performance', especially 93–96.

[16] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Making of a *Munshi*', 186–87.

Persian's spread across the Indian subcontinent then accelerated and deepened, its reach extending well beyond the spatial and temporal domains of the Mughal Empire, which it outlasted.[21] A critical factor in this development was not that Persian was declared the regime's lingua franca *per se*, or that record keeping at all levels of the state was thus to be done in Persian, but that the middling and lower-level bureaucracy was willing and able to actually effect this policy. We have already encountered the important category of bureaucrats sometimes known as *munshis* or *muharrirs* (clerks, scribes, secretaries) or as *kayasthas*, an increasing number of whom came from Khatri, Kayastha, or Brahman families (§7.2.3). We have met some of the most celebrated *munshis* of their time – Chandar Bhan Brahman, Raghunath Ray Kayastha, Sujan Rai, and Anand Ram 'Mukhlis' – through the accounts they have left us.

The *munshi* was not a single creature, but a catch-all term for a range of higher- and lower-level civil servants, while the category of Indian scribal peoples was wider still.[22] Nevertheless, the elite *munshis'* accounts help us understand the clerks' world, from their education and training to the discharge of their daily duties once in office. That said, first-person accounts – let alone autobiographical accounts – are a relatively rare find. Thus, we may turn to another set of sources, comprised of normative texts intended for the scribal class (so-called mirrors-for-*munshis*, analogous to mirrors-for-princes). The latter includes the classic *Insha'-i Harkaran* by Harkaran Das Kambuh of Multan, penned during the reign of Jahangir and translated in the early period of Company rule, or the *Nigarnama-i Munshi*, which was concerned with the *munshi's* training and those technical subjects of which 'he ought to rightfully claim a mastery'.[23]

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[17] The Mughal elite eventually took a closer interest in Hindavi, and the explosion of Persian in some ways proceeded in parallel with (and sometimes in interaction with) the development of Hindavi and its dialects (e.g., Braj, Avadhi); Alam, 'Pursuit', 317–19, 342–48.

[18] Ibid, 319.

[19] Ibid, 319–24, 348.

[20] Ibid, 324.

[21] Persian was only abolished as the 'official language' of the state by the Company in the 1830s.

[22] O'Hanlon *et al*, 'Scribal Service People'.

How, then, did largely Hindu Indian communities – until then working in Hindavi – learn and master Persian, some even going on to earn renown as Persianate litterateurs and savants? We do not have the kind of rich social history of language(s) and their learning lately produced by John Gallagher for early modern England. He focusses on schools and universities, but also extracurricular and extrainstitutional education (e.g., in the home, coffeeshop, or marketplace, which were becoming increasingly important venues for linguistic encounters and learning), and thus on teachers, textbooks, and (speech-oriented) conversation manuals as well as conventional dictionaries and grammars. He is also attentive to the polyglot character of the British Isles, where speakers of some English dialect or other might also be familiar with cosmopolitan and regional languages (e.g., Latin and Cornish), and where a plethora of 'foreign' languages and their dialects had to be reckoned with in workplaces and wider society (e.g., French, Tuscan/Italian), all of which gave rise to a linguistic mêlée not dissimilar to that found in early modern India.[24] We do, however, know of the reform of *madrasa* education in Akbar's time – a pivotal development involving the 'introduction of secular themes in the syllabi at middle levels' that was part and parcel of Mir Fathallah Shirazi's reforms.[25]

A detour through Mir Fathallah's career is instructive, revealing how this change came about as well as some larger issues relevant to our study of knowledge. Having matriculated in the curriculum taught in the celebrated and well-connected centre of Shiraz, he was learned in 'mathematics, statecraft, astronomy and history, and could therefore contribute to a state administration that used linear time and a new solar calendar in the service of a ruthless revenue collection.'[26] His teacher fell out of favour, triggering Mir Fathullah and his scholar-comrades' search for a substitute patron. They went not to the Mughal north, but the Deccan, for it had extensive and close cultural, commercial, religious, and intellectual links to Iran and was more hospitable to Shi'is. There, a former pupil had become a scholar of renown, tried his luck and succeeded as an advisor to the Bijapur sultan, and was hence able to place his countrymen into important positions in the sultanate. Thus, Mir Fathallah was enticed to the Deccan, which played an important role in mediating India-Iran flows of human capital, and where he learnt how to acculturate his learning to the Indian context.

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[23] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Making of a *Munshi*', 186.

[24] Gallagher, *Learning Languages*, whose point of departure is the observation that English was the tongue of some islanders on the periphery of Europe, which perhaps makes it different to those broad-reaching languages described in this chapter. Gallagher also expressly observes that language ability was not a matter of fluency or not, but of multiple (il)literacies and competences, often closely depending on context or *habitus*.

[25] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Making of a *Munshi*', 187.

[26] Anooshahr, 'Shirazi Scholars', 334, for citation, and 335–37, for deeper analysis of Mir Fathallah's education and his intellectual milieu.

The death of the pro-*ghariban* (pro-Iranian) ʿAli ʿAdil Shah I, combined with the new and more inclusivity ideology of the Mughal state following the formulation of the policy of *sulh-i kull* (§3.3.4), prompted Mir Fathallah's relocation to the Mughal lands. There, he worked with Raja Todar Mal to streamline the Mughal state apparatus.[27] His training in astronomy meant he was also tasked with devising a new calendar for the empire that reconciled the Muslim calendrical system based on lunar cycles with Indic solar or lunisolar systems to, among all else, smoothen the functioning of the revenue-bureaucratic system of the state.[28] After taking some responsibility for the education of Mughal noble youths, he helped redraw educational curricula, taking inspiration from the Shiraz tradition as 'Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Koranic exegesis (*tafsir*) and the study of reports from the time of the Prophet (*hadith*) were downgraded in favour of astronomy, philosophy (*hikmat*), medicine, mathematics, poetry, history and mythography'.[29] The latter, Ali Anooshahr notes, 'were not significant topics of study in Shiraz and their inclusion obviously reflects the contingencies of Akbar's court.'[30] Overall, this change – and the intellectual climate to which the Shirazi scholars contributed – was 'key to the incorporation of Hindu administrative officials into the Mughal administrative system.'[31] Political context, his career amply reveals, had a strong influence over what was studied and taught, how it was learnt, and who partook in this education, even as the *madrasa* system and the broad structure of the programme resembled the kind of education received in, say, Istanbul or the Deccan.[32]

Returning to the middle and lower rungs of the state apparatus, we should note that some Hindus learnt Persian before this time, yet *kayasthas* subsequently began to join '*madrasas* in large numbers to acquire mastery in Persian language and literature, which now promised a good career in the imperial service.'[33] Of course, the costs and benefits had to be carefully weighed up. Administrative careers could become a family occupation and parlayed into landed rights, making possible the acquisition of gentry status and the enjoyment of an urbane life among the literati, as seems to have happened in Bengal, or compensate for – if not recover – lands and status lost during Indo-Muslim conquest, as was the fate of certain Brahmans in the Deccan.[34] Yet, service to an 'unclean' or 'barbarian' master could imperil one's caste status (§2.1.2; §3.2.1), requiring some ideological-rhetorical fillip to rationalise a Persianate education and one's subsequent career within Indo-Muslim states of the sort found in manuals known as *mestaks*.[35] At the same time, the 'mundane routines of a scribe's work, his careful use of instruments for preparing paper, pen and ink, his hours of labour at escritoire or writing table, the accuracy and legibility of his writing and his conscientious management of documents entrusted to him', Rosalind O'Hanlon notes, 'could also constitute a form of religious service.'[36]

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[27] Ibid, 339–44.

[28] Blake, *Time*, especially 119–32, 138–40.

[29] Anooshahr, 'Shirazi Scholars', 344.

[30] Ibid, 344.

[31] Ibid, 344, for citation, and 347–48.

[32] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat*, 13–40, for the education of an Ottoman contemporary, Mustafa Ali; Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 15–48, on Celalzade Mustafa, ditto. For an intricate portrait of early modern Persianate education in the Deccan: Flatt, *Living Well*, 34–43, 167–209.

[33] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Making of a *Munshi*', 187. Such was the importance of Persian, that Shudras also mastered the language, according to Kinra in *Writing*, 24.

Private tuition was available to a select few, from the young Chandar Bhan to the imperial princes, with learning in the *madrasa* classroom being the norm for others.[37] Proceeding in stages – from learning the script, to basic proficiency in language, to an all-round learnedness in Persianate works on the arts and sciences – studies in the *madrasa* likely sat side-by-side with the learners' education in other venues (e.g., the family firm or home), and was thus a conscious investment and by no means a quick crash-course.[38] Part of this education involved a structured programme covering Persian *language*, starting with use of the *nisab* genre (i.e., rhyming dictionaries for children) and building to more complex dictionaries and primers in grammar, and also Persian *literature*, via *tazkiras* (compendia containing poets' biographies and short examples of their verse) and set texts reflecting what may be called literary classics (e.g., the thirteenth-century *Gulistan* by Sa'di); language and literary learning naturally reinforced one another.[39] Proficiency was also attained and honed via training in more practical arts as learners read and engaged with Persian-language treatises on *akhlaq*; advice literature or textbooks (*dastur-al amal*), including those on arithmetic (*hisab*) and accountancy (*siyaq*); and *munshats*, which advised – through prose exemplars or models of *belles-lettres* – on *insha*, the art of writing in Persian (notably, of epistolary compositions), and ultimately of Persianate comportment, and on scribal skills (*navisindagi*).[40] In time, new Indo-Persian works and commentaries relating to each of these genres were added, some penned by *kayasthas* themselves as the latter became fully acculturated in the (evolving) Persianate tradition and attained fame as literati. Indar Sen's *Khulasat us-Siyaq* (1703–04), a self-avowedly up-to-date accountancy manual, is one such example.[41]

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[34] Chatterjee, 'Scribal Elites', 460–62, and *passim*, for a portrait of high-status groups' service in sultanate and Mughal Bengal that decentres and nuances the account provided, above.

[35] Guha, 'Serving the Barbarian', here especially 507, 513–22; Minkowski in 'Learned Brahmans'. See, also: §7.2.3.

[36] O'Hanlon *et al*, 'Scribal Service People', 447–48, which draws on the work of Desphande and others.

[37] Dudney, 'Persian-Language Education', 82; Faruqui, *Princes*, 78–82, for details of the imperial princes' education.

[38] Such is the picture given by Nek Rai's autobiographical account of his early years, described by Alam and Subrahmanyam in 'Making of a *Munshi*', 191–206. See, also: Alam, 'Pursuit', 326–30; Haider, 'Accountancy Manuals', 268–70. On the role of family and professional networks as a resource offering access to patronage or mentorship, training in the norms of professional conduct, (scarce) reading materials, and news, as well as the very great difficulty of maintaining multiple affiliations amidst changes in politics and patronage: Dhavan, 'Networks'.

[39] Dudney, 'Persian-Language Education', 80, 83, 85–87.

[40] Chatterjee, '*Mahzar-namas*', 397–99. See, also: Flatt, *Living Well*, 39–52.

So far, we have dealt with the education of fairly elite actors, but what of those a little lower down the socio-economic hierarchy? 'Sikhism's written culture and egalitarian principles', Hardip Singh Syan highlights, 'seems to have fostered Sikh schools in certain parts of Mughal India.'[42] Of importance here are the *masands* (administrative officers), because their main role was to support *sangats* (congregational communities) and because they were appointed on the basis of their literacy as much as their piety.[43] The *masands*, much as the Sikh literati and savants, wrote and read Punjabi and Braj (in Gurmukhi script) and perhaps other languages like Persian. These literate Sikhs are likely to have created schools for local *sangats* on the gurus' compulsions, where Sikh boys would have studied the scriptures and gained some numeracy and literacy in vernaculars like Hindavi, and which were thus a rough counterpart to the *madrasas*. The evidence is scant, but it seems like the composition of the *masands* as a class was changing from its establishment during the guruship of Amar Das (1552–74) through the following century or so, with a majority of higher-evaluated castes (Brahmans and Khatris) giving way to those of humbler origins (mainly Jats), such was the empowering effect of the education received in the Sikh temple-schools.[44] Similarly, as Buddhist monasteries mushroomed across the countryside in early modern Siam, they helped transform an 'intensely local and fundamentally illiterate' culture. Boys studied for as little as six months, more usually for a few years, which gave them basic vernacular literacy (in Tai). But vernaculars like Tai or Braj were becoming more cosmopolitan registers, so that the effect of educating the sons of agriculturalists, fishermen, woodcutters, and the like was to link them to an extra-local culture.[45] This effect was compounded by the circulation of people and ideas. Thus, a Jat boy educated at a local temple-school might now grow into adulthood to became a *masand*, whereupon he became part of a network of Sikh leaders and communities forged via written communication in counterpart to those better-known networks of learned Brahmans who submitted *dharmapatras* to raise funds or seek adjudication in doctrinal matters.[46]

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[41] On works in this genre: Haider, 'Accountancy Manuals'. These often had a section on time and calendars, such was the importance of timeliness to accountancy and record-keeping, and to which this chapter returns.

[42] Syan, 'Debating Revolution', 1119.

[43] Ibid, 1119.

[44] Ibid, 1119–20. This correlates with Bayly's observation in *Empire and Information*, 37, of relatively higher literacy in these areas at the start of the colonial period.

[45] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 314.

[46] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 206. See, also: O'Hanlon, 'Speaking from Siva's Temple'; Bronner, 'South Meets North'.

Troupes of professional entertainers were part of this developing world of communication and literacy. Moving along pilgrimage and trade routes in Siam, for instance, their primary function was the performance of important rites (e.g., marriages, funerals, temple dedications). Such mobility was made possible by the spread of vernacular literacy, yet circulation also had the impact of diffusing elements of extra-local culture throughout the land, thereby integrating previously diffuse and localised societies via common forms of dress, ritual, discourse, and so forth.[47] In India, too, 'wandering cultural specialists', as C.A. Bayly has described bards and puppeteers, actors and jugglers, 'moved rapidly […] often from bases at the major pilgrimage places' and 'conveyed political and social messages which might originate in either the literate or the non-literate spheres.'[48] It was through *kirtans* and *bhajans* that the Sants and Sikhs extolled god, while *tamashas* (entertainments, usually consisting of song, dance, and comedy sketches) were performed for a broad public in Shahjahanabad and elsewhere. In both towns and villages, in private homes and courtyards or open-air performance spaces and closed assembly rooms, notes Francesca Orsini, 'singers performed and storytellers (*kathavachaks*) recited and expounded in front of mixed audiences'.[49] This was not a uniquely Indian development, for Japanese mendicants by turns entertained large crowds on the streets and ministered to merchants' religious needs in private, to take one example, but performance *did* have added significance in south Asia because of the relatively lower degree of textual literacy compared to Japan or Europe.[50]

Orality was probably more important in south Asia than in other parts of Eurasia; whatever the contributions of Sikh and other temple-schools, they were based upon fairly loose networks of priests, even when compared to Thailand and Burma.[51] A similar level of prosperity to India notwithstanding, Tokugawa Japan was a society that supported 'more than 40 per cent male education, mass lithography, and a system of commercial horseback messengers', in contrast to the monopoly over literacy by the clerical elite that 'was the preserve of little more than 10 per cent of the male population' in south Asia and the Ottoman middle East.[52] There is much truth to Bayly's observation that Indian society was a 'literacy aware' – if not a highly literate – one.[53] There also seems to have been a breaking down and opening up of knowledge and access to it, catalysed by the forces unleashed by popular religion and imperial administration.[54] But our interest turns to early modern developments in the arenas of higher learning and scientific knowledge, for which textual literacy was (often) essential.

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[47] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 316.

[48] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 208–09.

[49] Orsini, 'Inflected *Kathas*', here 195–96.

[50] Nobuyuki, 'Mendicant Monks'.

[51] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 6.

[52] Ibid, 5, for citation, and 37–38, for a nuanced discussion of regional and rural-urban variations.

[53] Ibid, 39.

[54] Ibid, 42, for citation, and 204, for description of the modes of oral transmission.

10.2 Early Modern Selves, the Body, and Embodied Knowledges

A side-effect of this literacy, learning, and the culture of inquiry was arguably a critical self-consciousness. A good deal has been written of the early moderns' purported discovery or realisation of the self and the 'inner' world of the conscious mind, although some scholars – uncannily echoing the racist views of historical actors regarding Africans – have viewed this development as peculiar to the West.[55] We have already seen, however, that it would be utterly false not to view the growth of individuality as a broader phenomenon.[56] Inspired by the work of the Renaissance scholar, Stephen Greenblatt, who popularised the notion of 'self-fashioning', Indian historians have examined the conscious fashioning of the kingly self and its presentation or performance in specific spaces and places (e.g., at the *jharoka-i darshan*, on *shikar*, in the travelling court and camp; §8.2–§8.3), to take one case.

William Shakespeare explored this self-consciousness in dialogues and soliloquies found, for instance, in *Hamlet* (1600). Elsewhere, he and others wrote of/from the 'self' in sonnets and prose fiction, but it was most concretely manifested in first-person narratives and autobiography, as well as day-books and account books.[57] A famous example is the diary kept by Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), which is well-known because it provides as fascinating a perspective on the workings of the English state and such events as the Great Fire of London as it does on its author. Pepys was a state secretary, much like his near-contemporary, Chandar Bhan Brahman, whom we have repeatedly encountered in this book. Both men crafted complex epistolary selves.[58] In fact, given that Pepys' diary was published posthumously, almost a century after his death, 'one can say with some confidence that even without the benefit of print capitalism', Rajiv Kinra stresses, 'Chandar Bhan probably had a much broader imagined community of readers than his English counterpart's "secret masterpiece"', with 'a great many of them hoping to emulate' the master's 'literary style, his career trajectory, and his confident sense of Mughal gentlemanly identity in order to advance their own careers.'[59]

How exceptional was Chandar Bhan's epistolary and autobiographical self? Although 'less common perhaps in Mughal India than in the Ottoman domains',

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[55] Sabean and Stefanovska, 'Introduction', 3. For a rich medical, philosophical, and cultural history by a literary scholar, see: Hackett, *Elizabethan Mind*, with discussion of 'how Elizabethans defined their own minds against the minds of all these Others' (145), specifically Africans, on 144–76.

[56] See, also: O'Hanlon *et al*, 'Scribal Service People', 450.

[57] Hackett, *Elizabethan Mind*, 1–3, 285–341.

[58] Kinra, *Writing*, 8.

[59] Ibid, 9, for citation, and 159–90, for analysis of Chandar Bhan's life and letters.

Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam note, first-person narratives *did* occupy 'a respectable place in Mughal belles-lettres.'[60] Autobiographical works *were* penned by the Mughal emperors Babur (in Chagatay Turkish) and Jahangir (in Persian), which stand alongside those of Babur's daughter, Gulbadan Begum (1523–1603), and his cousin, Haydar Mirza Dughlat (1499–1551), though these were not quite autobiographies in the modern sense of revealing the author's individuality.[61] As for memoirs written by commoners, the first noteworthy example is Banarasi Das' *Ardhakathanak* – discussed in earlier chapters – which was written in Braj and made its appearance during the reign of Shah Jahan.[62] A steady increase in such accounts followed, however, including one by 'Abdul Latif Gujarati and Nek Rai's *Tazkirat al-Safar wa Tuhfat al-Zafar* ('Account of Travel and the Gift of Success'), before the real explosion in the eighteenth century.[63] Yet, such appearances of the self were not exclusively linked to the culture of the Mughal, Persianate, or even the larger Indo-Islamicate ecumene.[64] The extensive Tamil-language private diary left by Ananda Ranga Pillai (1709–61), a businessman and sometime agent to the French Governor of Pondicherry, is a striking example in its richness and difference from the works of intellectuals like Chandar Bhan Brahman.[65]

All this demonstrates the implication of the conscious mind/body in knowledge production, to which can be added the scribes' self-disciplining of their bodily labour and their self-reflection on their labour routines as religious service.[66] As for the interaction with (let alone the impact upon) developments in knowledge *about* the body and what we would call psychology, and on medicine or healing, much remains to be studied.[67] Take, for example, Ayurveda, the now world-famous Indic system of bodily knowledge and life science.[68] Our understanding of how people received Ayurvedic remedies is remarkably incomplete, and it remains to be said whether there was anything like the division of labour between prescribing physicians and dispending druggists or pharmacists of the sort that emerged in urban centres in late Ming China, against the backdrop of deeper marketisation.[69] Other traditions extant in early modern India, such as Unani *tibb*, are more revealing: 'learned physicians wrote their texts in cosmopolitan registers of Arabic and Persian,' Shireen Hamza notes in an immensely valuable new study, 'but they used other languages and registers to communicate orally with patients and procurers of medicines' (e.g., farmers/growers, yogis/foragers, pharmacists/traders), such as Hindavi.[70] To do so, they relied upon medical glossaries that translated formal names in cosmopolitan or high registers into local, vernacular-language ones.[71]

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[60] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Making of a *Munshi*', 191. See, also: Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 175–77.

[61] Dale, 'Autobiography'. See, also: Dale, *Babur*.

[62] The Safavid ruler, Shah Tahmasb, also wrote a first-person narrative.

[63] Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'Making of a *Munshi*', 192, for citation, and 192–206, for discussion of Nek Rai's text.

[64] How far the 'vividly present' self constructed by Siddichandra in his autobiography was influenced by developments outside Sanskrit literature – namely, within the north Indian, Persianate ecumene – cannot presently be commented upon, save to note Pollock's observation that it was unprecedented: 'New Intellectuals', 20.

[65] Washbrook, 'Tamil Diary'.

[66] See, also: Haider, 'Accountancy Manuals', 272–73, which describes the routine (incorporating *puja*) prescribed as good or ethical conduct in the advice literature.

[67] Compare with: Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves*, which focuses on Galenic understandings and is thus particularly relevant to the discussion that follows, above.

[68] Wujastyk, ed., *Roots*, is a useful introduction.

Unani (or *yunani*, lit. 'Ionian') denotes a body of knowledge deriving from the theories of Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen, and Ibn Sinna (Avicenna) that viewed the body as a system constituted of four humours (air, fire, water, earth). Humoral balance amounted to good health, whereas disequilibrium lay at the root of illness according to its practitioners. Like Ayurveda, Unani was of very long standing by the early modern period, but it was hardly static. Well after the medieval golden age of Islamic science, a fourteenth-century Indo-Muslim scholar knowledgeable in Unani, Shihab al-Din Nagauri, synthesised the four Galenic humours with the three Ayurvedic *doshas* (variously composed of air, fire, and/or water), of which he had learnt upon his search for knowledge from learned yogis, and brought the work of Persian and Indian physicians together, referring to them both as *hakims* or practitioners of medicine.[72] Indian *hakims* continued through the early modern period to engage with medical ideas across knowledge traditions via translation and efforts toward compilation and systematisation, giving rise to a hybrid and plural landscape of medical knowledge and practice.[73] This dynamism notwithstanding, it may also have been the case that knowledge about health and the body was changing not so much in its central concepts or theories, as primarily in its social character, in the two or three centuries before the dawn of the Enlightenment and the beginning of colonial rule.

Unani operated at two levels within early modern India. First, there was Unani as a courtly or 'aristocratic virtue', that was 'tightly controlled' through literary production and actual medical practice by 'Iranian physician families

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[69] Berger, *Ayurveda*, 8, on its murky past; Pearson, 'Hindu Medical Practice', for a fraught attempt to uncover something of Ayurvedic *practice* from sixteenth-century Portuguese sources; Grove, 'Indigenous Knowledge', which discusses the caste of practitioners; Bian, *Know Your Remedies*, 126–52, on change in China.

[70] Hamza, 'Vernacular Languages', 116, for citation, and 120.

[71] Ibid. European contemporaries are also clearer on Unani (than Ayurveda) and its practitioners because they were mutually steeped in Galenic theory: Pearson, 'Hindu Medical Practice'.

[72] For the original Persian and a parallel English translation of this neglected text, with commentary, see: Hamza, 'Hakim's Tale'.

[73] On the integration of Ayurveda and Indic medical knowledges within Unani and, vice versa, the absorption of Persianate medical wisdom into Indian learning, see the ground-breaking work of Fabrizio Speziale in his *Culture Persane*. See, also: Hamza, 'Vernacular Languages', 122; Flatt, *Living Well*, 57–60, 253–59. Translation not only involved moving from one language to another, perhaps cosmopolitan or vernacular, but also between the oral and textual, or vice versa.

(*hakims*)' – that is, as 'high knowledge'.[74] Their migration was part of the larger movement of Iranians to early modern India, which saw such men as Hakim Abul Fath Gilani leave Gilan for Delhi in the sixteenth century, or the departure from Shiraz of Nur al-Din Muhammad Abdullah and Muhammad Akbar Shah Arzani in the seventeenth century. They found ready patronage at the Mughal, Deccani, and other courts, partly because the humoural theory of the body corresponded to ideas about the body politic and political sovereignty. These ideas about the microcosm and macrocosm linked the health of the individual and the proper organisation of society to the kingdom as a whole (§7.2.1; §4.2.1).[75] By the same turn, medical manuscripts and encyclopaedias (*tibbs*) produced by *hakims* upheld aristocratic virtue and consequently had political value; many Persian *hakims* held important positions at court, where medical, literary, historical, and political knowledges were imbricated through their written output and practice. Nur al-Din Muhammad Abdullah, for instance, was the nephew of the influential courtier, Abu al-Fazl, and became a doctor in residence at the Mughal court. Nur al-Din received imperial patronage: his *tibb* was dedicated to Dara Shukoh, while his influential pharmaceutical dictionary was dedicated to Shah Jahan. He was additionally supported by a Mughal nobleman, Amanallah Khan (d. 1637) – 'himself also a practicing physician and the author of at least one work on pharmacology, as well as a Persian translation of a fourteenth-century Sanskrit medical treatise' – to whom he dedicated his dictionary of Arabic and Persian medical terminology.[76]

Second, there was Unani as medical wisdom, the spread of which was linked to *hakims* of lower stature who trained in ordinary *madrasas*, where they read Persian/Unani and Arabic medical treatises, but seldom the high knowledge and literary forms of *tibb.* Some of these men apprenticed to the Iranian *hakims* of the court and thereby 'gained access to the ideas of the ornate Persian medical manuscripts their masters had authored or collected', but 'their tension with the *hakims* of high Persian learning simmered'. This tension had intensified by 'the mid-eighteenth century when Persian-knowing families experienced a weakening of their hold over medical knowledge.'[77]

On the one hand, the declining power of the Mughal court reduced the opportunities for patronage at the old imperial centre, yet correspondingly created new venues for Persianate learned men in the flourishing regional kingdoms. This helped preserve Unani as high knowledge.[78] On the other hand, the writing and circulation of medical manuals in an easy-to-read vernacularised Persian, many of which also contained ideas from Arabic texts and medical traditions, was changing the character and status of Unani *tibb* as a form of literary and intellectual output. One defence against this by elite *hakims* was to switch to a doctrinaire language – Arabic – and embrace the 'general orientation of literate Muslim society towards new learning that was streaming in from the Arab lands.'[79] The result was to confine certain medical knowledge to Arabic and to those who knew this language and, by extension, to maintain the prestige of the latter while making the former more rarefied.[80] Another consequence, however, was that medical knowledge 'dropped its Persianate comportment' to become 'more austere and scientistic.'[81] As this example shows, knowledge production and practice were inseparable from early modern mobility and circulation (of people and ideas), statecraft and imperial politics, and the choice of expressive registers amidst language change.

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[74] Alavi, 'Medical Culture', 856.

[75] Ibid, 856–58. See, also: Anooshahr, 'Emotional Communities'; Flatt, *Living Well*, 52–73.

[76] Kinra, *Writing*, 35, for citation and details of Nur al-Din's career and its significance, and 32–35, for a snapshot of medicine at the Mughal court derived from Chandar Bhan Brahman's account.

[77] Alavi, 'Medical Culture', 864.

[78] Ibid, 865–67.

In the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, Cretan Muslim and Greek physicians and intellectuals 'had important roles in spreading new medicine and information about natural sciences', presumably through a combination of translation and practice.[82] In the Mughal Empire and its successor states, a similar role may have been played by those European physicians and East India Company surgeons who found employ in the service of Indian rulers. Perhaps the most well-known, for his *Travels* remains a widely read account of his time abroad, is François Bernier (1622–88).[83] The Frenchman joined the entourage of a Mughal noble, with whom he discoursed on European discoveries in the sciences, and through whom he gained a position as Aurangzeb's physician.[84] Because a great deal of knowledge was uncodified, it is possible that Indic knowledge about the body and medicine was from time to time impacted by the work of these carriers of foreign knowledge traditions.

But not necessarily. Galenic theory remained popular in Europe through to the late Enlightenment, as evinced by the continued use of bloodletting and purges to bring the humours into balance, even as such ideas had been challenged from the sixteenth century by Andreas Vesalius and others; hence the compatibility of European practitioners with the medical expectations of elite patients in south and southeast Asia.[85] Given their dependence upon indigenous healers and the similarity of Galenic 'cures' to those used by local populations in early modern Atlantic Africa, Europeans actually 'learned and willingly borrowed more from locals than they gave in return or contributed to the African population's health.'[86] It would be wrong to assume, therefore, that European doctors demonstrated anything sufficiently novel to have left an impression on non-European court physicians, no matter that the former were rewarded for their medical service. If anything, European physicians were remade by their exposure to other traditions, as the career of René Charbonneau (1643–72) in Siam illustrates. The embrace of French medical practitioners had much to do with the Siamese king's universal sovereignty and his harbouring of all who came to his land to shelter or bring gifts and wisdom from faraway places (§8.4), rather than the inferiority of existing (mostly Sanskrit) learning or the shortage of practitioners (except surgeons). This explains the presence of Chinese, Indian, and *farhangi/firangi* ('Frankish', or European) physicians alongside Siamese ones. If surgeons were in short supply in Siam, it is because the spilling of blood abrogated received notions about the maintenance of order, with the letting or shedding of royal blood being especially dangerous.[87]

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[79] Ibid, 867.

[80] Ibid, especially 868.

[81] Ibid, 867.

[82] Yacioglu, 'Disciplining Bodies', 1565.

[83] Bernier, *Travels*, 350–454.

[84] See, also: Beasley, 'Decentering', 29. For some detail of English surgeons attending south Indian rulers and potentates around the same time, see: Winterbottom, *Hybrid Knowledge*, especially 115–18. There were numerous others besides these men.

[85] Cook, 'Medicine', especially 411–16, on the European side; Alberts, 'Translating', on the Thai.

Besides surgery and healing, numerous other forms of knowledge were and remained 'embodied in the status of the particular informant or knowledge community' in south Asia, where 'professionalisation' did not go hand-in-hand with 'textualisation'. Instead, 'knowledge-rich communities' remained decentralised and overlapping, as in much of the early modern world at large, albeit perhaps to a larger extent than in, say, east Asia or western Europe.[88] Architectural design and the realisation of plans by builders and craftsmen remained largely embodied and uncodified to a seemingly greater extent than in the West, instead transmitted orally-aurally or via learning by doing, posing a challenge for their study by historians.[89] And even where knowledge *was* transmitted textually, the emphasis was often on the 'externalisation' of wisdom thus received; hence, as C.A. Bayly suggested, 'ethical treatises understood the science of good government to be an embodied rather than an abstract science'.[90] It is to such texts and the theories and wisdoms they contained that we now turn.

10.3 Codified Forms of Knowledge and their Registers

On 6 December 1847, Aloys Sprenger was commissioned by the East India Company to survey the books in the library of the erstwhile *nawab* of Awadh and any other nearby collections deemed of interest. With the help of his assistant – one ʿAli Akbar – Sprenger pursued his task and planned a substantial catalogue before taking two years' sick leave, the result of which was to rush out a slenderer volume than hoped.[91] What his and other catalogues reveal, nevertheless, is something of the range of knowledges and knowledge traditions extant in early modern south Asia, not to mention their pertinence or interest to Indian rulers. In addition to texts in cosmopolitan registers – namely, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian – are those in the ancestral languages of certain Indian dynasties (e.g., Pashto), in poetic and/or local languages (e.g., Turkish, Hindavi), in other ancient languages of learning (e.g., Greek, Latin), and in European languages (e.g., English, French). In terms of subject matter, works of history, genealogy, and biography (especially *tazkira*), sit alongside poetry, instructional literature on such topics as gentlemanly comportment, comedy and satire, and works on jurisprudence, ethics, astrology, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, and allied technical subjects (e.g., veterinary science, farriery, falconry and hawking, elephants, accountancy, and so forth).[92]

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[86] Kananoja, *Healing Knowledge*, 9–10, for citation, and *passim*, for a fascinating and wide-ranging recent study.

[87] Alberts, 'Translating'.

[88] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 5.

[89] Against these challenges, historians have lately made great strides, as exemplified by: Dadlani, *From Stone*. See, also: Sohoni, *Deccan Sultanate*, 215, for a between-the-lines reading of buildings to discern the nature of design and building practices.

[90] O'Hanlon, 'Kingdom', 891, for this paraphrasing of Bayly's ideas.

Such collections were hardly amassed by accident; besides the gift of a single valuable book or the depositing of significant collections, as Jai Singh I did in Delhi, Indian rulers employed whole teams of scriveners and bookbinders to make copies of important works, or retouch or remake existing manuscripts, sometimes even despatching missions to acquire texts containing innovative learning from lands near or far, as we shall see.[93] And, of course, there was the arrogation of rivals' prestigious collections during conquest; this was how Tipu Sultan's (r. 1782–99) library of several thousand volumes was amassed and also how it was subsequently unmade/remade by the British.[94] As for the role of these libraries, this was not merely intellectual but also instrumental, for knowledge was power: the possession of valuable texts or entire collections, the patronage of scholars, the engagement with scholarship as part of the commitment to self-improvement, and the consultation and cultivation of specific bodies of wisdom were all tied up with the dispensation of 'good kingship' and the accumulation of this-worldly and supernatural abilities (see, e.g., §2.3, §2.5).[95]

Royal libraries were by no means the only places where scholarship was produced, stored, and/or consulted; temples, *maths*, *khanaqahs*, and other religious institutions or large elite households are likely others, while the market for poetry and the epics meant ownership of a few literary works was probably wider still, from imperial capitals down to *qasbahs*.[96] Nevertheless, royal collections give us some insight into the relationship of certain knowledge traditions to particular registers. We have already encountered the so-called Persian, Sanskrit, and Arabic cosmopolises that formed counterparts to the Latin cosmopolis in the West. What concerns us here are the languages of science.[97]

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[91] Sprenger, *Catalogue*.

[92] Khan, 'Awadh Scientific Renaissance'. See, also: Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 195; Alam and Alavi, trans., eds., *Pollier*, 32–35; Lally, 'Empires and Equines', 100, 106–07.

[93] Gupta, 'Remapping the World'.

[94] Ehrlich, 'Plunder and Prestige'.

[95] For a slightly different reading of the relationship of knowledge to power, encompassing surveillance, news, communication, and their respective networks in early modern India, see: Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 10–44.

In Europe, there were efforts to renew Latin (and Greek) connected to Humanism and projects of Reformation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Latin retained its appeal even in the seventeenth century among big thinkers wishing to reach a wide audience, to give their work the prestige and stability that would ensure its warm reception, and to help it endure the test of time. This explains the use of Latin by Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton.[98] Against this, however, was recourse to vernaculars by such prominent thinkers as Galileo Galilei (Italian), Francis Bacon (English), and René Descartes (French). Sometimes the outcome of authors' unfamiliarity with Latin, it was otherwise a more active choice in which a role was played by national institutions and nation-state projects, or the desire to reveal hidden or secret knowledge.[99] Ultimately, their use not only as languages of the imagination and other-worldly ideas, but also as languages of science, meant vernaculars displaced Latin in this period.

Compared to pre-modern Europe, then, the reach of vernacularisation was more limited in pre-colonial south Asia. Certain fields of knowledge production seem to have been ring-fenced, by and large remaining the preserve of Sanskrit and Persian specialists; namely, those concerning 'systematic' thought on this-worldly matters, a fact so plain as to have passed comment by contemporaries such as Mirza Khan in his *Tuhfat al Hind* (c. 1675), a survey of Braj Bhasha.[100]

In the specifically Indic ecumene, according to Sheldon Pollock's preliminary inquiries, Sanskrit retained an 'almost total – in some regions total – linguistic monopolisation [...] over the three primary disciplines of grammar, hermeneutics, and logic and epistemology', while vernacular works on law and moral philosophy (*dharmshastra*) are rare, and those on Ayurveda exhibit the clear hegemony of Sanskrit over other registers.[101] Among the plausible explanations, he points to the desire for 'orthographic stability' offered by Sanskrit for bodies of knowledge whose meaning – some contemporaries believed – would be muddied by recourse to vernacular registers. This was because vernaculars were evolving and thus unstable in the early modern period – although Sanskrit was, too, as some critics took pains to highlight.[102]

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[96] Ibid, 198–99, on different kinds of libraries and who could access them, and 42, on the availability of cheap versions of literary-religious works; O'Hanlon, 'Speaking from Siva's Temple', 258–59. As for record-keeping and knowledge more broadly conceived, families played an important role in this regard in early modern India: O'Hanlon, 'Performance'. See, also: O'Hanlon *et al*, 'Scribal Service People', 449.

[97] Pollock, 'Languages of Science', 25.

[98] Ibid, 36.

[99] Ibid, 37.

[100] Note that 'science', 'scholarship', 'learning', and 'systematic knowledge' could all be translated by the Sanskrit word *shastra*, but the latter's own meaning – and its relation to 'kindred concepts' like *jnana* and *vidya* – is as murky and manifold as 'science' is a pliable signifier in English: ibid, 21. Note, also, that science did find greater expression in Braj Bhasha than any other vernacular, 'but in a highly restricted sense', the exception proving the rule as far as Pollock is concerned: *op. cit.*, 26–29. See, also: Guha, 'Bad Language'.

A number of historians have lately shown how royal courts and the nascent courts of princes might be better conceived as households (§7.3.1). A related move has been to shift the focus of attention from royal courts as sites of scholarly patronage and intellectual production, to such entities described by historians as 'Sanskrit intellectual households' or 'Brahman scholar households', especially in the context of Banaras. That city began its rise from the late sixteenth century, partly thanks to Mughal patronage of Sanskrit intellectual life, and thereby secured its place in the religious and intellectual life of north Indian and western Deccan (Maratha) Brahmans.[103] The Sanskrit/Brahman scholar households were composites in the sense that different (male) householders 'contributed to its collective fortunes in ways that suited their individual talents: some as intellectuals, some as local educators and some again as copyists or in local administrative service roles.'[104] These scholar families 'defined their membership, and their reputations, both in terms of the biological sons who contributed to their resources, and the wider quasi-filial relations established through teaching'; so much so, in fact, that we can talk of the prestige of being connected to particular household lineages.[105]

The Sanskrit intellectual scene in early modern times was far more vibrant than can be characterised here. We ought pause, however, to consider the degree of intercommunication on matters of science between Sanskrit specialists and their counterparts in the Persianate or Indo-Islamicate ecumene. Whereas 'intellectual intercourse among astronomers may have been relatively relaxed and some scholars, such as the Jain Siddhichandra, celebrated their skills in Persian', other sources indicate 'the resistance among most Sanskrit intellectuals (Jains aside) to the use of Persian.'[106] 'Among Kashmiri Brahmans', for instance, 'there even emerged a new caste division between

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[101] Pollock, 'Languages of Science', 21–25.

[102] Ibid, 29–36.

[103] See: 'O'Hanlon, 'Speaking from Siva's Temple'. Elsewhere, too, Indo-Muslim patronage was key to Sanskrit-Brahman cultural production; see, for examples: Keune, 'Eknath', 77–78. Those scholarly and social networks soon reaching out of Banaras were not immediately all-encompassing. In the lifetime of the prolific writer, Appayya Dikshita (1520–93), they scarcely touched the Tamil country directly, though this changed after his death, when he was read in Banaras and his descendants visited that city. See: Bronner, 'South Meets North'.

[104] O'Hanlon *et al*, 'Scribal Service People', 452.

[105] Ibid, 452, for citation; O'Hanlon 'Speaking from Siva's Temple', for a detailed study. See, also: Vendell, 'Scribal Household in Flux'; Gomez, 'Sanskrit', 187–91.

[106] Pollock, 'Languages of Science', 35.

karkun (bureaucrats) who learned Persian and entered the service of sultans, and the *bhasbhatas* (language scholars) who maintained a Sanskrit cultural identity.'[107] Textual translation across such a gulf involved a complex process whose impetus came from curious and inquisitive royal patrons (§3.3.3), seldom from 'experts' themselves – though this does not preclude discourses between the learned operating in Sanskrit and Persian (§9.1).

Yet, the world of Sanskrit learning was neither hermetically sealed off by social/household reproduction, nor insulated from the interest emanating from other communities.[108] After all, the tentacles of the scholar household gripped the Persianate *and* Sanskrit traditions and the realms of bureaucratic *as well as* religious or literary production. And Brahmans, Jains, and other Sanskrit-literate elites were not merely recipients of patronage from the Mughals, Deccan sultans, and other Indo-Muslim rulers, or collaborators in courtly projects of translation from Sanskrit into Persian; some also acted as informants. Siddichandra's teacher, Bhanuchandra, helped Abu al-Fazl with parts of *Ain-i Akbari* concerning Hindavi culture, for example, while Brahmans supported the work of the Jesuit, Roberto Nobili (1577–1656), who sought local knowledge to shape his version of *accommodatio* and thereby successfully convert south Indians (§3.1.2).[109]

Another way of visualising exchange across knowledge traditions demarcated by register and religious affiliation is to look in the opposite direction; just as some Sanskrit scholars offered up their wisdom to their counterparts in the Persianate or Islamicate ecumenes, so, too, were some Sufis engaging with Indic languages and religious traditions. Without abandoning Dakhni and denouncing their Muslim identity, Sufi holy men in the Deccan were known to write in (metrical) Sanskritised Marathi or to expound on philosophical traditions from the Sanskrit world. While belonging to Sufi orders like the Qadiri, they were simultaneously 'part of lineages of Vaishnava or Shaiva teachers' – a fact which helps us make yet further sense of the appearance within the same frame of the Sufi and the yogi in the painting that opened this chapter.[110] With all this in mind, then, our attention turns to particular fields of this-worldly knowledge production that cut across the lines of sect, caste, and confession and the concerns of particular communities, sometimes even bringing them together.

10.4 Space: Navigation, Geography, and Cartography

Geographical knowledge could fall into the category of literature on the wonders and marvels (*'aja'ib wa ghara'ib*) of faraway places that was of long pedigree. The high-point of the Persian-language travel account was the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the topos representing an important form of knowledge production in the Persianate world. That said, its impact was undoubtedly lesser than that of the European travel account by dint of European (printed) texts' greater velocity of circulation. Persian accounts were, after all, manuscripts read in a library or acquired as a copy made by a scribe, rather than the cheap, printed pamphlet or book of its European counterpart.[111] To this can be added variations – evident across the Persianate world – in the geographic scope of accounts as well as the investment and interest in the genre by its (potential) producers and patrons. Europe, for instance, seems not to figure in Indo-Persian accounts until the late eighteenth century. Even those parts of Eurasia which were well-connected to the Mughal world and in regular receipt of travellers and pilgrims from India, such as central Asia and Iran, did not become the subject of contemporary accounts in the seventeenth century, or else these have not survived. By contrast, travellers from the Ottoman lands, Persia, and central Asia left a rich vein of accounts about their voyages and discoveries from the *firangi* lands in the west to Siam and countries even further east.[112]

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[107] Ibid, 35.

[108] See: Minkowski *et al*, 'Social History', and the essays introduced by that contribution, for a sense of the 'scene'.

[109] Pollock, 'New Intellectuals', 20; Županov, *Disputed Mission*.

[110] Sohoni, *Deccan Sultanate*, 63.

Contemporaries did not possess curiosity of an exclusively freakish sort, hungry only for wonders and marvels, however, nor was the rational accumulation of precise, empirical information or statistical data on land, territory, and countries unheard of. Take, as an example, the description and statistics on Tibet, its geography, and its resources written by the seventeenth-century Mughal courtier, Inayat Khan, garnered from his father, who had led an exploration to this distant frontier region.[113] Around the same time, the Qing Great State began its first major phase of expansion. Eventually, its westward march led to the reconciliation of diverse and often conflicting information, as well as the systematisation of new (and new kinds of) geographic data. Even more significantly, the horizons of this project gazed from such vantage points as Tibet into India, which not only lay beyond the empire's frontiers, but also beyond the sphere of influence shaped by tributary relations. The larger result, Matthew Mosca reveals, was to shift from a 'frontier' policy to a 'foreign' policy, and from maintaining tributary relations to active engagement with geopolitics.[114]

Useful knowledge was highly contextually specific, therefore, and the value of new kinds of knowledge or new ways of systematising it became apparent at different junctures. Circumstance also powerfully moulded the kinds of information that was prioritised or seen as valuable, rather than enjoyed for its novelty value. Censuses were more important in Japan and southeast Asia, Bayly argued, being more 'constrained by shortages of labour rather than of cash' compared to early modern India, where such information was collected sporadically and generally in response to some specific need, while tending to be less fine-grained.[115] Cadastral surveys, by contrast, were invaluable to the efficient functioning of the vast revenue-agrarian machinery of the Mughal state (§7.1.2). The nascent Tokugawa Shogunate, likewise, depended on new cadastral inquests and the resultant charts of agrarian yields to formalise and assign noble domains and military stipends.[116]

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[111] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 357–60.

[112] See, especially: Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 243–45; Emiralioğlu, 'China'.

[113] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 21. On the neglect of frontiers in Mughal historiography, and how (Mughal) contemporaries saw such spaces, see: Flores, *Unwanted Neighbours*, especially 4–16, and *passim*.

[114] Mosca, *Question of India*.

A larger proportion of geographical and allied knowledge remained embodied, partly because it was held by specialists who were not pressed into the service of the state, and partly because it could be transmitted in non-textual form to the relevant parties. Take, for instance, knowledge of places reached by the regular caravans of merchants and sundry travellers that linked north India with central Asia, Iran, Russia, and Tibet, or the Chinese agrarian heartland with the southern frontier toward southeast Asia, the western frontier toward central Asia, and with the Russian Empire. These movements were predicated on the geographic, environmental, and political knowledge of those pastoralists responsible for this locomotion, often involving thousands of animals.[117] They knew which routes to take, which were safe from bandits, and how to deal with corrupt bureaucrats trying to extract more than they were permitted. They also knew when to set off from north India before the hot and wet season, how to avoid snow in the high mountain passes, and how to time their passage so as to ensure pasturage for their animals and provisions for travellers were available at every stage of their journey.[118]

That said, such experts *might* inscribe their wisdom from time to time, offering us valuable glimpses of contemporary wisdom. Ahmad ibn Majid (d. c.1504) of Julfar in Oman, for instance, was the son and grandson of professional maritime pilots (*mu'allim*). He was familiar with instruments from the Islamicate world, such as the *qiyas* (compass) for star measurement and another for measuring latitude.[119] He used a 365-day solar calendar starting at Nowruz and saw the monsoon not merely as a meteorological phenomenon based on the winds but also as a temporal one; it had a timing and so, therefore, did departure from port to port. Thus, he navigated by combining techniques, technologies, and knowledges, for by 'interpreting winds and geography and the sighting of land, and with the guidance of the Polar Star which indicated latitude, the *mu'allim* determined his course and made necessary corrections along the way.'[120] Ibn Majid shared his expertise by writing navigation manuals in verse (and prose) so as to aid memorisation. Significantly, they demonstrate the achievements and impact of Arab nautical science in the Indian Ocean world on the eve of the Europeans' arrival in those waters via the Cape of Good Hope for the first time.

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[115] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 6, for citation, and 22–23.

[116] Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii, 470; Yonemoto, *Mapping*, 9, which notes the crudeness of the project and its products.

[117] See, also: Mosca, *Question of India*, 15–16.

[118] See: Dale, *Indian Merchants*; Lally, *Silk Roads*.

[119] Sivasundaram, 'Indian Ocean', 47.

[120] Ibid, 47–48.

For too long narrativised in miraculous terms or else as the result of European ingenuity, the so-called Age of Exploration or Occidental breakout (§1.3.2) can be reconceived as a process of appropriating the embodied knowledges of local merchants or maritime pilots; their codification under the aegis of western European states and corporations; and their interaction with new ideologies and technologies (e.g., navigational, geographic, military, naval, imperial) that supported overseas territorial or commercial expansion. Rather than unfolding in sequence, it was probably a highly iterative process, with Europeans turning again and again to the knowledge of non-Europeans, whether in places that were becoming familiar or else as they ventured farther around the globe. Perhaps the most breath-taking example of pre-modern geographical and navigational knowledge can be found within Tupaia's map of 1769. Tupaia (d. 1770) was a priest and navigator born in Ra'iatea in the Pacific whose extensive knowledge was appropriated by Captain Cook, for whom he produced his famous map that charted various far-flung islands and voyaging routes.[121] It stands as a reminder that the epistemic explosion concerning our terraqueous globe and its representation in cartographic form rested upon the foundations of indigenous peoples' knowledges *and* to the early modern uptick in travel and exploration in which both European and non-European peoples participated actively.

Acknowledging this role of non-European peoples and knowledges, some might nevertheless describe exploration as a European phenomenon by claiming that Europeans singularly pursued the kind of long-distance, overseas voyages that led to the discovery of new continents. Alas, in the late medieval period, western European merchants 'remained almost totally confined, both physically and intellectually, to a small slice of the world bounded by the north Atlantic and the Mediterranean', whereas their counterparts from the middle East to Japan capably plied long-distance land and sea routes.'[122] The most famous of the state-sponsored voyages were those of the Chinese admiral, Zheng He (1371–1433). The fruits of such voyages were manifested in a number of high-quality maps, such as the so-called Mao Kun Map from China of the Ming-era, the Kangnido Map of 1402 from Korea, the Javanese map shown in 1512 to the Portuguese captain, Albuquerque, and the Ottoman map produced by Piri Reis in 1513.[123] Although they differ in their coverage and do not adhere to the conventions of modern cartography (for reasons elucidated below), each of these examples is remarkable for showing the area from the Cape of Good Hope or the Horn of Africa toward lands more familiar to their makers, all with considerable accuracy.[124]

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[121] Eckstein and Schwarz, 'Tupaia's Map' for a fresh (and controversial) reading of the chart and the knowledges represented therein.

[122] Casale, *Ottoman Age*, 5.

[123] On Piri Reis' map, see: Casale, *Ottoman Age*, 23–25. Woodward, 'Mapping the World', offers an excellent visual and analytic survey of European and Asian maps – including the Kangnido Map – and the interaction of these two knowledge traditions.

Because of their relative isolation, the late medieval Iberian states necessarily had to harness the knowledge of local captains, navigators, and crews as they ventured further from Europe; such persons were the wellspring of the epistemic explosion linked to the Age of Exploration. But it is wrong to assume that knowledge of the outside world was readily channelled toward imperial centres in the middle East and Asia, just because some of their subjects possessed such wisdom by virtue of their travelling to faraway places, and just because state-sponsored missions had been made in times past. Or, to put it differently, what matters is whether these courts *remained* sufficiently curious about the outside world to the extent of propagating new knowledge. Recent scholarship suggests that the expansion of the Iberian empires precipitated a sharp intensification of such curiosity, which was sometimes also of a new kind and gave birth to what has lately been described as 'Catholic Orientalism'.[125] In fact, historians have steadily overturned the cliché of Iberian exploration and conquest as motivated by the limited priorities of the monarchs of what were essentially medieval kingdoms – namely, 'glory, gold, and God' – by pointing to the role of scientific learning as cause and effect of Portuguese and Spanish empire-building. Cosmography and natural history got the *conquistadores* to the New World and Asia, permitting the gathering of valuable observations, new data, indigenous knowledge, and specimens from faraway places for royal or learned patrons, in turn.[126]

In the Ottoman case, official and lay missions as far afield China supplied new information supporting the development of an 'Ottoman geographical consciousness', which can be detected from around the turn of the sixteenth century.[127] The conquest in 1517 of territories straddling the Red Sea proved pivotal, Giancarlo Casale argues, for these lands formed a gateway between the Mediterranean/European and the Indian Ocean/Asian worlds. They provided access to the revenues from the spice trade, opened a direct sea route from the Ottoman heartland to Asia, with a new geographic and cultural awareness deriving therefrom (especially of the larger Muslim world to the east), all of which underwrote a new conception of the sultan's universal sovereignty.[128] Their conquest also set the Ottomans in direct competition with the Portuguese, who had 'discovered' the trans-oceanic route to Asia under two decades prior, who sought control of the spice trade, and for whom exploration and conquest nurtured an increasingly audacious imperial ideology that was projected into the western Indian Ocean. Despite the medieval Arab geographers' knowledge of the Indian Ocean and surrounding lands, the sixteenth-century Ottomans were relatively unfamiliar with this arena. During the reign of Suleiman (r. 1520–66) this knowledge gap was closed. The Ottoman vizier, Ibrahim Pasha, had been responsible for the conquest of 1517 and was also instrumental in compelling Piri Reis to expand his atlas and navigational guide, the *Kitab-i Bahriye* ('Book of the Sea'). It was a ground-breaking work of Ottoman geography and cartography, absorbing recent information on the European voyages to the Americas and Asia, and was presented to the sultan in 1526.[129]

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[124] Pearson, *Indian Ocean*, 73–75, for details of these maps.

[125] Barreto Xavier and Županov, *Catholic Orientalism*, which was a precursor to, but also integral to, the better-studied Protestant Orientalism. India, the authors argue, was vital to new knowledges related to philology, ethnography, and medical botany.

[126] See, e.g., Bleichmar *et al*, eds., *Science*.

[127] Emiralioğlu, 'China', for a valuable analysis, with the coinage in the citation appearing on 161.

[128] See, also: Emiralioğlu, 'China', 168–87.

Ibrahim Pasha's efforts also resulted in such acquisitions as a chart attributed to Pedro Reinel, the Portuguese court cartographer.[130] This contributed to intellectual advance *and* represented an intelligence coup, for such knowledge was highly valuable and thus closely guarded.[131] The ratcheting up of imperial rivalry and economic competition over the ensuing decades spurred Ottoman alliance-building with other Indian Ocean powers, particularly Muslim ones; technological improvements in the military and naval fields; and the finessing of geographic knowledge by, for instance, tapping the epistemic pools of local maritime communities and travellers such as Seydi Ali Reis, author of the *Mir'atü'l-Memalik* ('Mirror of Countries') of 1557.[132] Thus, circumstances made particular forms of knowledge about the outside world valuable in the sixteenth century, prompting their patronage by the state in the Ottoman world as much as in Portugal.[133]

How did contemporaries make sense of each addition to geographic knowledge brought by an age of voyaging and a thickening of globalisation? In many corners of the globe, contradictory claims had come into being about the shape of the world by the start of the early modern period. In Europe, for instance, these were 'put forth in classical sources (which of course did not entirely agree with each other), scripture and medieval Jerusalem-centred *mappaemundi*, navigational portolan maps, and reports by real or putative travellers and sailors such as Marco Polo.'[134] Geographic practice was revolutionised by two factors. First, overseas voyaging, which supplied new geographic data to elaborate and refine maps. Second, the translation of Ptolemy's *Geography* into Latin in the fifteenth century, which led to 'the reintroduction of mathematical cartography' and thus a 'research method that brought all geographic data into competition on a unified field of debate.'[135] Accepting that the world was a 360-degree sphere, which did not happen overnight by any means, the cartographer's task then became one of reconciling geographic data to determine the point of this or that place in finite space so that it might be represented visually. As maps improved, so voyagers could make mathematical-astronomical observations toward the fine-tuning of particular charts, such that accuracy was achieved iteratively. The usefulness of maps increased rapidly over the sixteenth century; by 1570, an Antwerp printer was turning out Ortelius's world atlas, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, which was the first of its kind.[136] Ortelius was a contemporary of another Netherlandish geographer, Gerardus Mercator (1512–94), whose cartographic projection of the globe remains the basis of almost every modern map.

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[129] Casale, *Ottoman Age*, 36–37.

[130] Barreto Xavier and Županov, *Catholic Orientalism*, 36–45, on Portuguese mapping and cartography of the East.

[131] Casale, *Ottoman Age*, 37–38.

[132] This was an uneven development, which was put on hiatus during the viziership of Rustem Pasha but then revived under Sokollu Mehmed Pasha after 1565, for instance; see: Casale, *Ottoman Age*, especially 34–83, 117–151.

[133] More broadly on this theme, see: Buisseret, ed., *Maps*.

[134] Mosca, *Question of India*, 44.

Until the mid-Qing period, by contrast, Chinese scholars strived toward completeness, compiling citations from as many (frequently contradictory) texts as possible into geographic compendia, even if this meant never settling on a single image of the world.[137] Under the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662–1722), a radically new kind of map was produced in China, one which was drawn to scale and tried to show the relation of places in a systematic way, without accompanying text (as in older forms of Chinese maps). It was the product of a team of Jesuit missionaries working between 1708 and 1718; rather than competition, as in the Ottoman case, it was collaboration with Europeans that supported the production of new kinds of knowledge in China. This enterprise corresponded, Laura Hostetler notes, roughly 'with Peter the Great's mapping of Russia, French cartographic projects at home and in the New World, and early British colonial exploits in India.'[138] It was accompanied by ethnographic inquiry and, together, these knowledges supported a universalist imperial ideology and – as in the Russian, French, and British empires – colonial forms of control.[139] Finally, it epitomises to Hostetler a shift not from Oriental to Occidental forms of systematising and representing geographic knowledge, but from a premodern to an early modern kind, and one that was a product of globalisation characteristic of the era.[140] Having long been painted as disinterested in the outside world and culturally arrogant, late imperial China now appears much more intellectually open and its rulers growing far more curious about their realm and the world beyond than previously credited.[141] How about India, which has generally been painted as more open?

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[135] Ibid, 44–45. See, also: Casale, *Ottoman Age*, 15–22, for further detail and reproductions of key examples of some of the abovementioned kinds of charts, and the observation that Sultan Mehmed II (d. 1481) also patronised the 'rediscovery' of Classical geographic knowledges, so that Ottoman advances paralleled those made by European Humanists.

[136] Woodward, 'Mapping the World', 24.

[137] Mosca, *Question of India*, especially 26–46. See, however, Woodward, 'Mapping the World', 30–31, for discussion of Matteo Ricci's (1552–1610) significant contributions to Chinese map-making.

[138] Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 4.

[139] Ibid, especially 36–49, 81–203.

[140] Ibid, especially 13–25, 51–80, and *passim*.

The Mughal dynasts from Akbar to Aurangzeb loftily conceived of their empire as without limits, much like their Ottoman and Qing counterparts. On the one hand, this explains the 'conceit of the globe' in Mughal paintings.[142] Globes, as objects, were an early-modern novelty in Europe, with Elizabeth I and her courtiers almost immediately seizing upon the political possibilities of this new visualisation of territory and sovereignty, not least because many of them were already involved in England's growing overseas trade.[143] The globe's novel potential was not lost on the Mughals: gifts of globes and maps representing the terrestrial globe were widely sought from the 1580s onwards as Akbar developed links with European Christians.[144] Mercator's *Atlas* was published in its first complete edition in 1595, a copy of which was presented to Jahangir by Sir Thomas Roe (although purportedly returned), the cartographic projection of the maps contained therein a departure from those extant in Mughal India.[145] Roe's chaplain, Edward Terry, scoffed that the Mughal *padshah* called himself a 'conqueror of the world' yet had to ask for his domains to be pointed out to him, before asking to be shown Persia and Tartary (central Asia).[146] Rather quickly, however, such knowledge was absorbed by Mughal courtiers and artists like Abu al-Hasan, whose rendering of the globe (§8.4) comes complete with annotations naming important places within and beyond the Mughal realm, suggesting that he had access to maps in the Mughal collection, perhaps even Mercator's *Atlas*.[147] Thereafter, globes found their way into a number of Jahangiri and early Shah Jahani pictures of these Mughal emperors. These never showed the globe alienated from the kingly figure as an object of scientific learning, as in some Ottoman pictures, but rather as something over which the emperor could exert domination, either by standing upon a vast globe or else holding its entirety in the palm of his hand.[148] More broadly, Mughal artists adapted those forms of landscape projection and topographical representation that they found in European paintings to convey geographic space in new ways.[149]

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[141] For a nuanced discussion, encompassing intellectual fields pertinent to the present discussion, see: Mosca, *Question of India*, 5–11.

[142] Ramaswamy, 'Conceit', which engages critically with the work of historical geographers, historians of science, and cultural historians of cartography, not least the Renaissance scholar, Jerry Brotton.

[143] Ramaswamy, *Terrestrial*, 13. See, further: Dimmock, *Elizabethan Globalism*, especially 1–29.

[144] For their rarity in the Mughal world: Ramaswamy, 'Conceit', 769–70.

[145] Ramaswamy, 'Conceit', 752–53, 756–57 and nn. 3, 12.

[146] Ibid, 758.

[147] Ibid, 756–57 and n. 9.

[148] Several of these are usefully reproduced in: ibid, 761–68, which are analysed on 771–76, and see also 770, for discussion of an Ottoman picture of a globe as a scientific device.

[149] Beach and Koch, eds., *King of the World*, 138–42, 189.

On the other hand, so Jos Gommans argues, the Mughals' conception of kingship and empire explains a relative incuriosity on their part about the imperial *margins* and what lay *beyond*, in turn explaining 'the poor state of cartography' at large, for 'conspicuously missing from virtually all Mughal maps are territorial limitations', with the projection and realisation 'being extremely rough and appear[ing] to focus on the lateral lines of roads and rivers'.[150] We should be careful about attributing this to Mughal notions of universal empire *per se*. The Ottomans held a clear conception of borders or boundaries (*hudud*, in Arabic) even as maps made from the sixteenth century artfully subordinated those limits to stake the Ottoman sultan's claim to the lands beyond (as Europeans did, too). This demonstrates how cartography could actually service universal ambition.[151] And, whereas early cadastral surveys spurred shogunal mapping enterprises that steadily improved the stock of knowledge and clarity of cartographic representation, to the point where all manner of maps were printed and sold to a public curious to visualise Tokugawa Japan, the same cannot be said of Mughal India.[152]

Whether the attitude apparent in the Mughal centre was also common at other Indian courts remains largely a matter of speculation, although pilgrim maps might have been produced cheaply enough to find nearly as broad a market as the kinds of ephemera commonly bought in Japan.[153] What is apparent, however, is an interest in all manner of maps by the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries that led to the amassing of 'early modern India's most extensive cartographic collection' by the Kachhwaha dynasty of the Rajput state of Amber.[154] This comprised a wide range of map artefacts under a common rubric (*taraha*), including a map of late seventeenth-century Surat painted on cloth and marked with important buildings (including noble mansions, gardens, and European warehouses), another of early eighteenth-century Agra, as well as a fine map painted on paper of the newly laid-out city of Jaipur complete with architectural as well as topographical detail.[155] There are also 'route maps, military maps, pilgrimage maps, construction drawings of individual buildings, and gardens drawn on grid paper, maps depicting forts and palaces outside of Amber and Jaipur, and maps related to the purchasing of lands.'[156] Their importance was such that they appear in the records of both the palace library (*potikhana*) and the painting workshop (*suratkhana*), while court artists were trained to be as adept in genres such as portraiture as in mapmaking.[157]

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[150] Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 20. This contrasts with the relative accuracy of the globes copied by Mughal artists into Mughal paintings (§8.4). The Mughals are perhaps peculiar, however, rather than being emblematic of Indian curiosity in the world and its mapping; they seem to have been less interested, for instance, in Persian cosmographical works – some containing maps of the world – than their counterparts in the Deccan: Gupta, 'Mapping the World'.

[151] Brummett, 'Ottoman Space'.

[152] Yonemoto, *Mapping*, 8–42, which is attentive to the challenges of these enterprises and notes the 'shogunate's nonproprietary attitude toward cartographic information' (16) that enabled commercial production of maps.

[153] For this latter suggestion, see: Venkateswaran and Tillotson, eds., *Masterpieces*, 86–87.

[154] Khera, *Moods*, 39.

[155] These examples are reproduced in: Venkateswaran and Tillotson, eds., *Masterpieces*, 48–49, 58–59, 68–69.

At first glance, the route maps in the Jaipur collection bear resemblance to earlier Mughal exemplars, except painters were not only in receipt of new information supplied by surveyors, but also developing techniques to improve a map's functionality. Thus, in addition to giving a sense of the terrain and the location of urban precincts and important infrastructure like water bodies and tanks, and annotations of place names, the makers give 'the distance from one place to the next, prioritising directionality and sequence of travel on the ground' with the 'network of small junctions, important stations (denoted by two concentric circles), and diagrammed urban landmarks creat[ing] a cartographic artifact ready for use.'[158] Such works, Dipti Khera reveals, are composite products that bring together the expertise and talents of different kinds of experts.[159] A beautiful, late eighteenth-century map of the fortified city of Ranthambor is a world apart from the simple and crude maps of the high Mughal period, serving very well its patron's aesthetic sensibilities, his desire to commemorate his predecessor's seizure of the fort some decades prior (and its original form ahead of subsequent modifications), and thus his military-technological interests, even if the planimetric view seems clumsy when set against changes to urban cartography in early modern Europe, where a crude bird's-eye view had long given way to two-dimensional projections.[160]

Cartography was not static in late Mughal India, therefore, and its distinctiveness is explicable with reference to the very different priorities of Amber's rulers, for instance, from patrons in certain European centres. At the same time, Khera's work reveals the extent to which maps were not just about domination and ownership, but also about an aesthetic appreciation of the landscape, honour or pride of place, or simply about knowledge – ambitions and sentiments that could also be expressed in visual artefacts other than maps as we know them. And the very same held true in early modern Europe, no matter that these facts have been easy to forget in the obsession to chart the rise of modern forms of geographic knowledge.[161]

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[156] Khera, *Moods*, 39.

[157] Ibid, 39.

[158] Ibid, 41.

[159] Ibid, 41, and 42, for reproduction of examples.

[160] Ibid, 43–44, for discussion and a reproduction of the map; Borsay, *Urban Renaissance*, 81–85, on European developments.

[161] See, instructively: Wooding, *Tudor England*, 18–19.

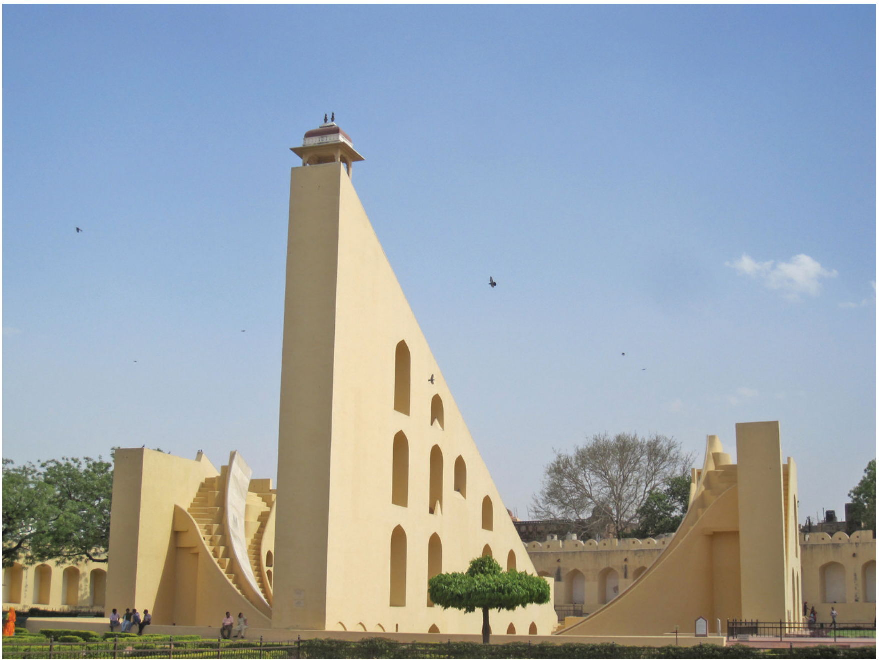

Fig. 10B The Jaipur Jantar Mantar

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

10.5 Time: Mathematics, Astronomy, and Horology

Today, a glance at our phones or digital devices lets us know the time with extraordinary precision, not to mention such information as the day of the week, month, and year, or the time many thousands of miles away in another part of the world. Timekeeping or horology is something we take for granted, therefore, and we would be hard pressed to conceive of – let alone name – our local time expert. Yet, this was not so in the past, when knowledgeable persons known as a *jyotisha* (in Sanskrit) and *munajjim* (Persian) or *muneccim* (Ottoman Turkish) were vital to the proper marking of religious rites and festivals, the ceremonial and daily business of the royal court, and the execution – on the part of the state – of such procedures as annual tax collection and revenue disbursement.[162] If the 24-hour day, 7-day week, and 365-day and 12-month year has hegemony nowadays, the same was not true in the past, when the day might start at sunrise or sunset depending on local ways of dividing time, for example, or when the Islamic lunar calendar jostled with different lunisolar or solar calendars of various forms (of which the Gregorian calendar that came into being in 1582 was but one). Reconciling and navigating between these different systems made the job of the time expert even more complex and important in the multicultural empires of the Safavids, Mughals, and Ottomans, Stephen P. Blake highlights. 'In the Indic temporal system, as in the Islamic,' he writes, 'it was the astronomer/astrologer who was the time expert', so that horology, astronomy, and astrology were imbricated.[163] With an astrolabe and astronomical almanac (*zij*) in hand, the *jyotisha* or *munajjim* looked to the skies and consulted their charts to inform local people – potentates and the poor alike – of the current date/time. The *munajjim's* bread and butter, however, came from casting horoscopes or interpreting such events as equinoxes, solstices, eclipses, or the appearance of comets.[164]

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[162] On this last, see: Blake, *Time*, 107–40. See, also: Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 247–52.

For astronomical knowledge to be of service to the just ruler of a well-functioning kingdom and his pious and observant subjects, accuracy was pivotal. It was this quest for accuracy that bequeathed the world a handful of early modern observatories still standing across north India today, although their existence owes to the curiosity and engagement with diverse bodies of scholarly knowledge by a *sub*-imperial ruler, Jai Singh II. We have already encountered the raja of Amber in connexion with his realisation of an innovative plan for a new city – Jaipur – built on an orthogonal grid, the form of which partly derived from engagement with archaic Sanskrit manuals (§4.2.1). Jaipur was the site of one of his new observatories (Fig. 10B); others were constructed in the Mughal capital at Delhi, in Ujjain (the capital of the raja's *jagir* of Malwa), and in the religious and intellectual centres at Mathura and Varanasi.[165] Known as *jantar mantars* (lit. 'calculation instruments'), these complexes contained a group of large masonry instruments used to calculate the movement of the celestial bodies, including a sundial.[166]

According to an eighteenth-century Indo-Persian account, Jai Singh was assisted by Mirza Muhammad 'Abid and Mirza Khayr Allah in the observatories' construction, for they were knowledgeable in scholarship from across the Islamicate world. The observatories were modelled on the famous and once cutting-edge one in the Mughals' ancestral lands in central Asia, built by their relative Ulugh Beg Mirza (d. 1449), who had also patronised scholars and built a university.[167] As for the astronomers responsible for making and recording observations, they were drawn from both the Indic-Sanskritic and Islamicate-Persianate intellectual ecumenes, although men such as Jaganatha Samrat were encouraged to learn Persian and Arabic to master the classic Islamic astronomical texts. Jai Singh also employed Jesuits.[168] Based on their data, Jai Singh prepared the *Zij-i Muhammad Shahi* (1728).[169] But in 1730, he despatched a mission to Portugal – comprised of one Father Emmanuel de Figueredo and Muhammad Sharif, among others – to obtain new instruments and texts. They returned with an edition of the *Tabulae Astronomicae* of 1702 by Phillipe de La Hire (1640–1718), from whom Jai Singh appropriated 'refraction-correction tables' – hitherto unknown in Islamic astronomy – to revise his own calculations, which he produced in the *Zij-i Jadid-i Muhammad Shahi* ('New Astronomical Treatise of [Emperor] Muhammad Shah') of 1731–32, and which became well known among contemporary Indian and Iranian scholars, including those from Shiraz, which was still an important centre of mathematical and astronomical training.[170] These works were deposited alongside others in Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic, as well as Hindi, Bengali, Latin, French, German, and English, in a library with over 200 titles.[171] Thus, Jai Singh's scientific pursuits brought together different practitioners and their respective bodies of knowledge within India, while also linking north India to central Asia, Iran, and western Europe.[172]

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[163] Blake, *Time*, 59, for citation, and 48–75, on the work of time experts in each empire, as well as discussion of technologies such as water clocks.

[164] Ibid, 10–14.

[165] The Mathura observatory was torn down during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

[166] Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology*, 119–20, explains the construction and function of the instruments, as well as differences in their number and uses between the five observatories. See, also: Venkateswaran and Tillotson, eds., *Masterpieces*, 56–57.

[167] Hodgson, *Venture*, 145; Anooshahr, 312, who also describes the impact of Ulugh Beg's patronage of scientific inquiry on the early Mughal rulers. See, also: Blake, *Time*, 17–19, for details of the observatory at Samarkand and its contributions to Islamic astronomy.

In this example, Indian science mediated knowledge transfer from West to East to such an extent that the idea of diffusion becomes untenable. It was not, moreover, the only example of the scholarly engagement with ideas from other knowledge traditions, and knowledge did not merely flow from Europe to the rest of the world. We know, for instance, how Chinese Muslims played a key role in collecting and translating Arabic and Persian treatises, hoping to reconcile Islamic with Confucian thought, ultimately making the learning they contained available to Chinese intellectuals at large.[173] We also know from the sixteenth-century Ottoman admiral, Seydi ʿAli Reis, of being detained at Humayun's court because of the emperor's desire to understand the equator, measuring solar and lunar eclipses with an astrolabe, and the workings of astronomical tables, much as we know that seventeenth-century Latin works were translated into Persian, including those by Rene Descartes (1596–1650) and Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), who published on the transit of Mercury.[174] If Gassendi's scepticism and empiricism earns him the accolade of being a 'quintessentially "modern" […] scientist and philosopher', and since François Bernier translated his works in India *before* returning to – and championing Gassendi in – France, then it is significant that Gassendi 'actually found a receptive audience in India simultaneously with, if not in fact prior to, his influence in Europe.'[175] Yet, what was *not* translated is also significant, as Marshall G.S. Hodgson noted: 'not the works of Kepler or Galileo – only, it seems, such works as did not presuppose major transitions from the Islamicate tradition: planetary tables, in particular.'[176]

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[168] Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology*, 120–22. See: Minkowski, 'Learned Brahmans', for a biographically and bibliographically led survey of Hindu astral scientists at the Mughal court and thus the longer history of knowledge exchange across these ecumenes (and occasional resistance to absorbing *yavana* or 'westerner' science).

[169] See, for discussion of the *zij* tradition, including the distinction between observational and computational works: Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology*, 113–18.

[170] Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Early Persianate Modernity', here 266, and 266–69, for details of later Indo-Persianate astronomical knowledge production. For a recent and detailed dive into the engagement with ideas contained in de la Hire's text, see: Plofker, 'Sanskrit Mathematical Astronomy', especially 23–29. For two relevant primary sources from the Jaipur archives and accompanying commentary that enrich what is described here, see: Venkateswaran and Tillotson, eds., *Masterpieces*, 70–73. See, also: Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology*, 124.

[171] Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology*, 122.

[172] Other fields of intellectual, technological, or practical knowledge likewise engendered new networks, while also being sustained by those of longer standing. Of these, we might note the transfer of underground water storage technology from western Asia to the western coast of India in the early modern period (i.e., along the commercial-cum-religious routes across the western Indian Ocean), resulting in a new set of buildings (*tankas* or cisterns) and water management techniques; see: Keller, 'Cloistering Water'.

Science (*hikmat*) certainly had an important place at the 'court of the cosmocrat' – as the Mughal centre from Humayun's time has been characterised – much as it did in other parts of the contemporary Indo-Islamicate world and post-Mughal south Asia. Yet, this very placement dictated the shape of inquiry and the kinds of knowledges that were of interest, sought out, and in receipt of patronage.[177] It would be wrong to assume that this was widely at odds with the relationship of royal centres to astronomy, astrology, or other 'rational' and 'occult' sciences elsewhere in the Islamicate world.[178] In early modern Christendom, too, messianism and looking to the skies for portentous wisdom was widely prevalent and not necessarily at odds with the flourishing of rationalism and scientific inquiry in many of the same venues (e.g., at royal centres) or under the same patronage (e.g., by kings).[179] In Germany during the 1680s, for instance, Johann Jacob Zimmerman – a theologian and astronomer, who predicted the End Times coming before the year 1693 – was widely celebrated and earned a disciple in Johannes Kelpius (1667–1708). His work on the Great Comet was not only cited by Isaac Newton (1643–1727); he also earned a wider following that helped take his lineage of apocalyptic, astrological, alchemical, and occult thinking to north America.[180] Once we realise that such a figure as Johannes Kepler (1571–64) maintained an interest in astrology and conceived of the universe as a living body in his ground-breaking work that gave enormous credence to Copernican heliocentrism, or how the father of the gravitational-physical theory of the solar system, Isaac Newton (1643–1726), maintained a lifelong interest in writing about the End Times, then we can begin to understand how '[a]pocalyptic thought coexisted easily with modernity and even Enlightenment.'[181]

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[173] Weil, 'Unveiling Nature'.

[174] Anooshahr, 'Science', 306.

[175] Kinra, 'Handling Diversity', 288. See, also: Beasley, 'Decentering', 29.

[176] Hodgson, *Venture*, 145.

[177] See, most valuably: Anooshahr, 'Science'. Humayun's interest in the astral sciences, as Anooshahr notes, blurred the boundaries between astronomy (*hay'at*), astrology (*nujum*), divination, and cosmology – not that this was unusual anywhere in the world – while his interest in astrology was perhaps *secondary* and *subordinate* to that in mathematics (*riyazi*). *C.f.* Orthmann, 'Humayun's Search'.

[178] Lefèvre, 'Messianism, Rationalism', for a deeper examination of how these categories of thought sat together in Mughal India, situated within the empire's wider Indian Ocean and Indo-Islamicate context. Khafipour, ed., *Empires*, 345–400, for primary source materials.

[179] See: §3.3.5.

It would also be very wrong to assume that Indian science was totally unreceptive to more cutting-edge ideas that marked a substantive break with existing learning, let alone being inherently averse to doing so, much as historians of the middle East and China have likewise shown such notions to be falsehoods born of ignorance.[182] Taking but one example, the keeper-practitioners of classical Sanskrit mathematical astronomy and its texts (*jyotishastras*) had for centuries engaged with ideas hailing from ancient Greek and Islamic astronomy, also being interested in new instruments (e.g., the astrolabe), a tendency not abating through the early modern period (Jai Singh had a telescope in his possession, for instance). The impact of Western science in the colonial era, as it happens, was not to simply subsume Indic astrology so much as create new branches.[183] By the same turn, we should note that medieval astronomers working in the Islamicate ecumene sometimes conversed with and absorbed ideas from Sanskrit scholars, while the modern observatory built in late eighteenth-century colonial Madras could not have functioned without the Indians expert in the *jyotishastras*. The modern/Western relied on the Eastern/traditional, in other words.[184]

But there are always limits to such two-way exchange, with resistance to change or disinterest in dialogue coming, potentially, from either side.[185] Surely responsibility for the types of European works found in Jai Singh's library lies partly with the raja's intermediaries. On the one hand, Jai Singh was benefitting from the steady globalisation of knowledge. Another well-known example of this process and its outcomes is the dialogue opened by the Jesuit, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), with the Ming imperial court following his presentation of mechanical clocks. His aim was to establish a mission station, in which he succeeded, but the larger impact was exchange between Chinese and European mathematicians and scientists (including those cartographers, described above) and the creation of an observatory in the Forbidden City.[186] A less-known, but nonetheless impressive example, is the observation of celestial bodies and the cultivation of astronomical and mathematical knowledge in Timbuktu, present-day Mali, which was the capital of the Songhay Empire and linked – via pilgrimage and trade routes – to north Africa and Arabia. The manuscripts found there have hardly been studied, although preliminary inquiry suggests a lively interest in learning from the Islamic and wider world, and that the observation of the stars was used to determine the direction of Mecca, necessary for Muslims to pray.[187]

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[180] Jenkins, *Climate, Catastrophe, and Faith*, 118.

[181] Ibid, 118, for citation and discussion of Newton; Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology*, 138, on Kepler, and 143–45, on how astronomy continually invigorated astrology (and, thus, magical thinking; see: §2.5.2), and vice versa.

[182] The Ottomans built an observatory to rival Ulugh Beg's in 1579 and, though it was 'torn down by a superstitious vizier', its astronomers had gathered much valuable data, meanwhile; Hodgson, *Venture*, 121.

[183] Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology*, 112–25, digests the two-way exchange between Indic and Islamicate astronomy from medieval times to the eighteenth century. See: Plofker, 'Sanskrit Mathematical Astronomy', on the various branches of colonial-era Indic astronomy. See, also: Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 252–64.

[184] Kumar, 'Instrumental Brahmin'.

[185] On a different set of Jesuit networks involved with the *transmission* of Indian astronomical knowledge *to* Europe: Raina, 'French Jesuit'.

On the other hand, networks and those shaping them connect what/who they want to connect, to the extent of privileging certain actors, spaces, or ideas while marginalising or ignoring others. The Catholic Church had condemned the heliocentric ideas of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), even burning one Dominican mathematician and astronomer alive for espousing such views, while Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) was brought before the Inquisition. Thus, it is little surprise Catholic scholars were working in the frame of Ptolemaic astronomy, and that the Jesuits brought back de La Hire for Jai Singh, and not Copernicus, Tycho Brahe (1546–1601), Kepler, Galileo, or Newton.[188] If more cutting-edge learning was available in Tokugawa Japan, it had as much to do with the interest in information among the shogunal government as the expulsion of the Portuguese. This resulted in the monopoly over Euro-Japanese exchange passing from Portugal to the Netherlands. The concurrent Dutch commercial 'golden age' nurtured the intellectual 'enlightenment' that underwrote the rise of *rangaku* (Dutch learning) beginning in c. 1640 but especially from 1720, not to mention the return flow of Asian medical knowledge to Europe.[189]

Scientific advance in Europe and the creation of *a* Europe-wide intellectual community could be blocked by opposition from powerful institutions like the Catholic Church, therefore, much as now-disregarded sciences like astrology or more traditional forms of astronomy retained their place in

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[186] See: Flowers, 'Scientific Knowledge'. A useful guide to Jesuit science across the early modern world, critical of the development of the historiography, is Donato and Pavone, 'Science'.

[187] Medupe, 'Timbuktu'.

[188] Blake, *Astronomy and Astrology*, 124, for this observation, 130–32, for how Copernicus 'marked the beginning of the end for the superiority of Islamic astronomy and astrology', even as his heliocentric theories were prefigured by (and probably borrowed from) Islamic thinkers, and 133–43, for the evolution of his ideas via Brahe and Kepler to Newton. See, also: Blake, *Time*, 64–65.

[189] On the *bakufu*'s hunger for information: Boot, 'Dutch-Japanese Trade'. On scientific exchange in both directions: Cook, *Matters of Exchange*, 339–77.

European monarchies in ways just described (see, also: §2.5.2). Significantly, however, another set of developments was underway. One facet of this was vernacularisation; languages like English were on the rise, their standardisation and spread occurring in tandem with both political centralisation *and* the corresponding decline of Latin.[190] 'Old limits' remained upon what could be known and the ancients retained their authority in the Sanskrit ecumene, however, which evinced 'nothing comparable to the moment in seventeenth-century England when scholars of natural philosophy decided to look at nature itself rather than read Aristotle and Galen – whose works from that moment on became chapters in a history of science and no longer science', Sheldon Pollock writes.[191] We have already seen that vernaculars were the loci of innovation in early modern India. What concerns us presently is how 'the vernacular both intellectualised itself and institutionalised its power, processes indissociably linked to new national and statist projects.'[192] This occurred in parts of Europe but not in south Asia. There were eight national academies founded in western Europe before 1671, including the Académie Française (1635) and the Royal Society (1662), receiving their impetus as much from gentlemen as those in professions (e.g., gardeners, physicians).[193] Thus, when seventeenth-century European scientists were self-consciously declaring an 'intellectual renewal', some chose to do so in their respective vernaculars; hence, the titles of works by luminaries like Galileo, Blaise Pascal (1623–62), and Robert Boyle (1627–91) reference the *nuovo*/*nouvelle*/ new.[194]

Although the vernacularisation of science culminated in the creation of *national* institutions in parts of Europe, it would be remiss to ignore the role played by overseas *empire*.[195] A new current gradually swept through certain European courts and aristocratic-cum-intellectual circles, one which linked astronomy and other natural sciences not to ideology but to prosperity, not to monarchical authority but to state power. Royal patronage of learned societies in early modern France and England, for instance, illustrates the extent to which war, the profits from trade in goods and enslaved persons, and the worldwide networks engendered by commerce gave impetus to scientific discovery in the fields of astronomy, mechanics, metallurgy, engineering, and so forth.[196] Reflexively, overseas voyaging and dominion nourished botanists and other natural scientists with specimens, observations, and data – the last including meteorological and astronomical data from aboard ship, such as Captain Cook's observation of the transit of Venus in the Pacific.[197] Such flows of information and materials made even small states – like the Dutch Republic – capable of becoming important players in the so-called Scientific Revolution.[198] Inspired by French and British forerunners and this scientific ferment, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) articulated his hopes for 'the unification of *sapientia* (wisdom) and *potentia* (power) in the service of social reform,' seeing 'learned societies as providing the rulers of political societies with the knowledge needed to bring about rational social change.'[199] In 1700, the Berlin Academy was founded for an increasingly powerful state, albeit one without an empire; Leibniz, carrying his vision of science as the servant of the state, was installed as its first president.[200]

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[190] Gallagher, *Language Learning*, 9.

[191] Pollock, 'New Intellectuals', 23.

[192] Ibid, 25.

[193] Cook, *Matters of Exchange*, 412–13.

[194] Pollock, 'New Intellectuals', 22–23.

[195] *C.f.* ibid, 26.

[196] See: Satia, *Empire of Guns*, 161–64, and much of the first part of that book. There were, however, not only significant continuities between these institutions as patrons of scientific learning and the royal courts that preceded them, but also key differences between the new, national institutions themselves, with the British society woefully underfunded compared to the French; see: Moran, 'Courts and Academies'.

We can glean a little of the status of astronomy in British culture and politics from the incorporation of the figures of Galileo, Tycho Brahe, and John Flamsteed in the decorative frescos of the Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College beside the Thames. Completed in 1726, these frescos also depict the personification of the continents (Africa, America, Asia, Europe), the riches derived from trade, and the prowess of the navy, thereby explicitly linking the astral sciences with trade and empire in a building used by wounded and retired veterans of the British navy. Flamsteed (1646–1719) had lived and worked a short walk away at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, being the very first Astronomer Royal. Flamsteed's celebrity and his immortalisation in the frescos and other images seems not to have an equal in early modern India, however, where identifying the names of particular astronomers is difficult enough. This is not because Jai Singh was the only eighteenth-century Indian ruler who took great interest in astronomy/astrology, for we also know of Raja Krishnachandra (1710–83) in Nadia, Bengal, whose knowledge of the astral sciences and its key texts has recently come to light through examination of his correspondence with servants of the East India Company.[201] Rather, it was the very different social and political context of knowledge production that distinguishes these Indian kings' scientific interest from that of European rulers and elites.

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[197] Excellent surveys can be found in: Grove, 'Indigenous Knowledge', on European inquiry into botanical-medical knowledge in Asia from the Portuguese onward; Drayton, 'Knowledge and Empire', focusing on Britain and its empire.

[198] Cook, *Matters of Exchange*; Swan, *Rarities*. None of this is intended to reinstate older views of Europe as the locus of scientific advance, with the non-European world merely supplying the raw materials, such picture having been thoroughly dislodged thanks to, for instance: Raj, *Relocating*.

[199] Moran, 'Courts and Academies', 270–71.

[200] Ibid, 271.

[201] Ehrlich, 'New Lights', which also presents these sources in full.

10.6 Conclusion

Gunpowder, the late Marshall G.S. Hodgson alleged, made possible Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal territorial expansion and consolidation (§6.4.2), leading to a larger economic, cultural, and intellectual 'florescence', in turn.[202] Yet, for Hodgson, this 'Persianate flowering' was limited in two respects. In the first place, it was not the 'origination' of something new, but more of a 'culmination' of achievements made by states and societies in the Islamic world over several centuries. It was, moreover, rather conservative in character at that. Echoing the ideas of Johan Huizinga (§11.2), Hodgson noted that Persianate poetry and its forms were reworked 'within established lines of tradition', instead of smashing down the walls of convention.[203] Another set of limitations, to Hodgson's mind, became apparent upon comparing the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal flowering to the one taking place at the same time in Europe – land of the Renaissance and then the Enlightenment – a world in which, he believed, 'new channels of creative activity are being opened up, where the accent is rather continuously on innovation, even drastic innovation, and where, for a time, the usual conservative spirit of agrarianate-level society is damped down.'[204] But, we might pause to ask, is any of this fair?

Gunpowder technology, we have already seen, was not always decisive, facts that have compelled the urgent rethinking of the whole Military Revolution and the very idea of the gunpowder empires. Giving substance to the notion of *ex oriente lux*, a generation or so of increasingly globally minded Renaissance scholarship has discerned the imprint of Muslim thought in the European classics of the period and in the sciences, of the Muslim world upon Humanist inquiry and the nascent idea of 'Europe', and the far wider and more sustained impact of East-West exchanges on the arts and culture.[205] That said, it was not simply a case of the East giving and the West receiving, for dialogue and exchange was a two-way flow, even if it worked out differently in one direction compared to the other. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the Mughal courtier, Abdus Sattar, was tasked to study Latin and *firangi* science, religion, and politics, to add a further example to those described in this chapter.[206] Lest we privilege East-West channels, we should remember that the boundaries of inquiry were – for better or worse – sometimes set by the choice of register, not to mention that other geographies of circulation (e.g., around the Persianate world, within the Indian Ocean) or established links to other non-European centres (e.g. Shiraz) might have been more important or prestigious than those reaching to the Occident.

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[202] Hodgson, *Venture*, 49–52.

[203] Ibid, 14, 15.

[204] Ibid, 15, for citation, and 120, where he alleges that these Occidental developments would have been difficult for 'outsiders' to comprehend and engage with, though he implies – by noting the proximity of the Ottomans and their relations with Europe – that other factors must also have been at play.

[205] See, for instance: Saliba, *Islamic Science*, especially 193–255; Adelman, 'Mimesis', 92; Meserve, *Empires of Islam*; Jardine and Brotton, *Global Interests*.

[206] Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 178.

A similar set of revisionisms is leaving its mark upon the history of early modern science and medicine.[207] Until relatively recently, this historiographical field was fairly elitist in its preoccupations, largely focusing on upper-class men in the West, under whose aegis there was said to have been a Scientific Revolution and an Enlightenment in Europe – concepts the scholarship did not hesitate to perpetuate – that bequeathed 'modern science' to the world. One route to repainting the canvas was to rethink what comprised 'science' in broader terms and thereby bring into view the work of such (non-elite) figures as herbalists and astrologers, and even those charlatans and quacks who captivated and duped contemporaries. A complementary enterprise has been to consciously fix upon the gendered, classed, and raced dimensions of historical inquiry, often with the result of bringing a wider and more diverse range of actors into the frame.

Another feature of much of the historiography was its Eurocentrism, for modern science was thought to have developed only in Europe and from there diffused to other parts of the world in the early modern and colonial eras. Against this, historians have lately tried to decentre scientific inquiry and to think in plural terms about the sciences, rather than talking of *a* science, *tout court*. At the same time, they highlight the contributions of non-European peoples and knowledges in the making of Western scientific modernity; some have even studied such learning and wisdom in its own right and on its own terms.[208] Although the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment have been central to identifying early modernity and writing its history, these revisionist manoeuvres have not eviscerated so much as enriched our understanding of the early modern world. To explore this historiographical turning point, we might usefully examine a form of knowledge about which little has so far been said in this chapter, but which any survey of the early modern world would be remiss to ignore: ethnobotany.[209]

A fourteen-volume, fully illustrated herbal titled *Le Jardin de Lorixa* ('The Flora of Orissa'), found in archives in Paris, has been critically studied by Kapil Raj.[210] At face value, it was the work of one L'Empereur, a French surgeon born in Normandy who travelled to India and found employment in the service of the French East India Company (est. 1664). His motivation seems to have been to gather valuable knowledge about unfamiliar botanical species so that they might be put to the benefit of European healers. He wished, more specifically, to present this material in codified form, for he was aware that Indians were knowledgeable about useful plants, thus often bypassing druggists by making their own preparations. In this endeavour, he was no pioneer, for the arrival of successive European nations in the Indian Ocean world was accompanied by a corresponding interest from their respective communities of natural scientists, their activities often having a competitive dynamic to them. In the first place, there was the Portuguese work of Garcia da Orta (c. 1500–c.1568) and Cristovão da Costa (c.1515–c.1592), which presented information collated on the Malabar coast in Portuguese and was translated into Latin almost immediately in 1567 by Charles de l'Escluse (Carolus Clusius), the eminent botanist and founder of the botanical garden in Leiden.[211] Then came Hendrik Adriaan Van Reede tot Drakenstein's (1636–91) illustrated *Hortus Malabaricus* ('Garden of Malabar'), which was published in twelve volumes in Amsterdam between 1678 and 1693 and became a standard reference work, followed by a book by fellow Dutchman, Paul Hermann (1646–95), on Ceylon's flora. The English, too, collected plants and submitted them to London, via a critical engagement with experts in natural knowledge and *materia medica* in such arenas as royal courts, military camps, city hospitals, urban physic gardens, the bazaar, and apothecaries' shops.[212]

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[207] For a recent survey of developments in the history of science written from a French academic perspective: Romano, 'Reflections'.

[208] Such critiques have been mounting. See, most recently, Shank, 'After the Scientific Revolution', which forms the introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Early Modern History* outlining the roots of the problem while calling for what has been described, above, and proposing means of redressing the historiographical status quo.

[209] See, for instance: Grove, 'Indigenous Knowledge'.

[210] Raj, *Relocating*, 35–39, for the details that follow.

Much as European traders relied on local intermediaries or agents to execute their business dealings in Asia (§5.3.2), so Europeans interested in plants ascertained valuable information by tapping into the relevant local epistemic and artisanal communities to produce what Anna Winterbottom calls 'hybrid knowledge'.[213] L'Empereur, for instance, had pharmacopoeias and other texts translated from Oriya (the language of Orissa/Odisha) into Hindustani – of which he had some knowledge – to serve as the basis for his translations into French, while he also relied on agents to travel far afield to consult with locals, collect plants, and make note of their therapeutic and economic uses. L'Empereur also relied on local artists to draw and paint the leaves, stems, flowers, fruits, and seeds of specimens, the results of which can be found in the Paris manuscript, and which mark a departure from Indian pictorial representations of flora in form, execution, and their overarching purpose or use.[214] 'His' work was composited and illustrated in south Asia, therefore, and only shipped to the *Académie des Sciences* in Paris once completed in 1725. His contribution, Raj argues, 'much as that of Van Reede and da Orta' lay 'not in gathering information held by undifferentiated, authochtonous groups, but in *reconfiguring* and *constructing* knowledge, skills, and specialised practices – for the regional, as much as for the European, knowledge markets.'[215]

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[211] Barreto Xavier and Županov, *Catholic Orientalism*, 77–111. See, also: Walker, 'Remedies', for later transmission of medical learning from the Indian Ocean world to Portugal.

[212] Winterbottom, *Hybrid Knowledge*, 112–39, which is centred on, and looks outward from, Madras.

[213] Ibid, here 1–3, where the limits of the term are addressed.

[214] Raj, *Relocating*, 40–52, which includes a comparison of the *Jardin de Lorixa* with the *Hortus Malabaricus*. On the long-term, lasting impact of such collaboration on Indian pictorial tradition, see: Dalrymple, ed., *Forgotten Masters*.

These men and the works bearing their authorship were not mere extensions of European practices and traditions, but merit studying in their own right, given the reliance on various kinds of local specialists and on various acts of linguistic and inter-cultural translation.[216] India, as a space and place, and Indians, as knowledgeable or highly skilled people, played a vital role in what have long been conceived as European intellectual developments in the early modern period, therefore, much the same being true in other parts of Asia, in Africa, the Americas, and the Pacific world.[217] 'Indians' does not only mean Indian men, however, and here we might valuably examine the frontispiece to L'Empereur's manuscript, painted by a local artist in a hybrid European-vernacular style. It depicts a European figure (presumably L'Empereur) standing beside an Indian ascetic/savant, an Indian painter, an Indian assistant, and, most notably, an Indian woman carrying a basket of specimens, probably those she has collected herself.[218] That a woman is part of this scene testifies to the fact that the (embodied) skills and knowledges upon which Europeans relied in producing early modern knowledge was not only derived from non-Europeans, was not only processed and sometimes circulated in the wider world before it made its impact in Europe, all of which helps decentre the Scientific Revolution, but was also hardly an all-male preserve.[219]

Indeed, from the preceding pages, it might seem that teaching and learning, knowledge production and dissemination, intellectual dialogue, debate, and exchange were fields of life inhabited only by men. True, entry to certain institutions of learning, contact with certain intellectuals, and receipt of patronage for the pursuit of inquiry were largely (if not wholly) restricted to men, and not only in early modern India, but also across most of Europe, where notable exceptions prove the rule.[220] The 'almost universal dictate that Sanskrit was the language of men' is not entirely unwarranted, Kashi Gomez argues, although it was also the case that 'a certain subset of women could, and did, have access to Sanskrit learning', while an even smaller number entered the record as authors.[221] Indeed, there are signs of the situation changing in early modern times, with more women cropping up as the authors of Sanskrit texts in Vijayanagara's successor states, for instance, not least as the rise of households as important political, economic, and intellectual units provided well-placed women greater access to the intellectual productions of the Sanskrit world.[222]

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[215] Raj, *Relocating*, 57.

[216] Ibid, 58–59.

[217] There exists a large literature on this topic, although mostly for the period from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. See, however: Grove, 'Indigenous Knowledge'.

[218] Raj, *Relocating*, 33, for a reproduction. See, also: Ghosh, *Nutmeg's Curse*, 94–96, on indigenous women's scientific knowledge.

[219] Schiebinger, 'Women', 201–05, for European and indigenous women naturalists.

[220] Ibid, 192–99.

[221] Gomez, 'Sanskrit', 169–70.

In the early eighteenth-century Tanjavur kingdom, Gomez highlights, a 'prolific Sanskrit author and commentator' named Ghanashyama 'regularly paid tribute to his two wives Sundari and Kamala in his writings' and, moreover, 'undertook a joint commentarial project with them' on an important medieval Sanskrit drama.[223] As for the Persianate sphere, we know of around twenty female poets already in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Iran; a late Safavid travel account written by a woman; the verses of Mughal royal women; and a late eighteenth-century Indian text authored by one Bibi Hashmat al-Daula, whose translation of oral tales from various vernaculars, combined with standard Persian prose and poetic works, she herself knew to represent what Zahra Shah calls an 'incursion into the conventionally male domain of literary Persian.'[224] And vernacular literacy was itself a means for female literary and intellectual expression, as evinced by a late seventeenth-century Braj 'courtesan's handbook' titled the *Kridavinoda* ('The Pleasure of Amusement') written by Mohan Rai, one of several literate maidservants and courtesans at the Jaipur court.[225]

Women probably played a larger part in intellectual life than we might think. Women may not have had their star trumpeted in what was an avowedly male-dominated world; little of their achievement is known to us unless they were mentioned by their male counterparts and correspondents, or had the means and abilities to leave some account of their own life and works. One such example is the scientist and philosopher Katherine Jones (1615–91), Viscountess Ranelagh, who corresponded with some of the leading lights of the English Enlightenment and was sister to the chemist and co-originator of what became the Royal Society, Robert Boyle, arguably influencing him a great deal.[226] Our difficulty in envisioning women's roles derives from how they have been obscured by the historical record, but it is also a product of where we – as historians – have chosen to focus our attention. Turning from the women hidden in the midst of the crowd, such as Katherine Jones, we might also usefully shift our gaze from elite spaces to the everyday habitations of various knowledges and their practitioners.[227] Thus, for instance, if we look away from Ulugh Beg's or Jai Singh's observatories and beyond the gendered confines of ‘gentlemanly science’, we bring into view women like Bija Munajjima – a mystic, mathematician, astrologer-astronomer renowned for her ability in calculating calendars, poet, patron of literature and charitable institutions, and the fierce rival of local (male) intellectuals.[228] Born in fifteenth-century Herat, she might be unusual because her name entered the record, and her renown was certainly due to her extraordinary talents, yet there are few reasons to believe she was an oddity.

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[222] Ibid, 193–94.

[223] Ibid, 168–69.

[224] Szuppe, 'Jewels of Wonder'; Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 24–44; Shah, 'Female Authorship', 448–49, for citation and discussion of where else female authorship can be discerned in the Indo-Persian cannon, and *passim*.

[225] Venkateswaran and Tillotson, eds., *Masterpieces*, 40–41.

[226] Much has changed since the publication of Schapin and Schaffer's prize-winning and seminal *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, concerning Boyle's debate with Hobbes, in which we find scant mention of Boyle's sister, for we now have DiMeo's *Lady Ranelagh*, an extensive intellectual biography of Katherine Jones demonstrating her depth, breadth, and reach in scientific life.

[227] See, here: Schiebinger, 'Women', 199–201.

To bring such women into view, we might begin by looking away from *public* spaces or from court physicians, at the same time conceiving the early modern medical landscape as plural, populated by diverse actors (ecclesiastical, popular, and medical proper). Thus, we might see those women who assisted *hakims* and other bodily specialists (*vaidyas*), exorcists, and priests, or were medical practitioners in their own right, not least midwives (*dais*) and female healers and herbalists operating in *private* spaces.[229] African women, for instance, were vital to providing early modern Europeans with access to local sources of healing knowledge, as recent research reveals.[230] As for gendered medicine, we now know that indigenous women from the Americas to Asia were vital, possessing bodily and healing knowledge relating to menstruation, pregnancy, and abortion.[231] Abortion *rights*, moreover, reveal how early modern (gendered) medical practice was entangled with the development of capitalism, religious belief, and state power – some of the overarching topics of this book. In a thought-provoking recent study of eighteenth-century Marwar, Divya Cherian has linked Hindu women’s bodies and their abortion rights to the political influence of merchant communities, and the latter’s evolving notions of property, which included female family members; the adjudications of Brahmans – as gatekeepers of the caste order – over the boundaries of the licit/illicit, including concerns about sexual relations; and the widening jurisdiction of the state’s authority.[232]

This interrogation of the historiography, historical methods, and sources is apt as we move toward a form of knowledge examined by way of conclusion, in the next and final chapter of this book. The period after Timur left saw an upswell in the production of ‘heroic narratives, genealogical accounts, local or caste *puranas*, [and] biographies and hagiographies’ in India’s high languages and vernaculars. These offered ‘kings, merchants, and spiritual figures, through the medium of professional poets or members of their circles,’ Orsini and Sheikh note, ‘a way of producing one’s own history or inscribing oneself in larger histories.’[233] Such productions range from inscriptions carved in stone, to manuscripts in their own right, but 'history' can also be found within the entries in those numerous glossaries and dictionaries produced at this time that 'offer[ed] etymologies and lexical histories in their explanations', as well as paintings that 'deliberately relocated "classical" tales to local landscapes, turning them into records of their own times', and more besides.[234] History in its diverse forms was an important field of knowledge production, therefore, while a consciousness of the past and one's place within it reflected the early modern discovery of the self as much as it reveals – to us, the moderns – something of the period's distinctiveness, as we shall see.

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[228] Szuppe, ‘Jewels of Wonder’, 328–29.

[229] Here, inspiration is taken from David Gentilcore’s model of medical pluralism in *Healers and Healing*, see especially 2–3.

[230] Kananoja, *Healing Knowledge*, especially 73, 90, 98, 107, 114–19, 122.

[231] See, e.g., ibid; Few, ‘Medical *Mestizaje*’. Indicatively, for south Asia, see: Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 264–66.

[232] Cherian, ‘Governing’.

[233] Orsini and Sheikh, ‘Introduction’, 4.

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[234] Ibid, 4.

11 Conclusion

Originating in train of the Counter-Reformation, and first propagated by Catholic institutions and princes, the Baroque was an elaborate style that influenced architecture and the visual arts, as well as music and performance.[1] It reached its apogee in Europe in the later seventeenth century but, thanks to the world-encircling Spanish and Portuguese empires, enjoyed a truly global career lasting well into the nineteenth century. Baroque architecture even travelled and mutated across northwest Europe and crossed the channel to England. St Paul's Cathedral, rebuilt after the Great Fire of London of 1666, stands in testament to the style's power and appeal even in Protestant lands, where buildings and their decoration were thus linked to those found from Mexico to Manilla. The Baroque also worked its magic in places beyond the reach of Catholic or Protestant monarchs and missionaries, however.

Upon the Ottoman court's return to Istanbul in 1703 from Edirne, where it had lived out much of the later seventeenth century, sultanic patronage of the arts and architecture sought to proclaim and reassert imperial identity, all the while marking a break with the past – both the long-gone glories of the sixteenth-century classical age and the turbulence that followed. Under Ahmed III (r. 1703–30), the first steps were subtle yet decisive: a playful reworking of Ottoman classical architecture (its forms, materials, and motifs) by suffusing these with the selective borrowing and refiguring of influences from Europe. Under his successors and other elite patrons, there was a sea change – albeit one built upon the experimentation and new bodies of experience of the preceding years – in the form of the Ottoman Baroque. It was because the Baroque had become a global mode that the Ottomans did not merely emulate, but instead appropriated and localised it into a truly hybrid style, thereby announcing the dynasty as key players – with their own distinctive identity and history – in what had by then become a truly international political sphere. Its crowning glory was the sultanic cathedral-mosque of Nuruosmaniye

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[1] For a sophisticated problematisation of the Baroque, its moorings, usefulness, and critics: Hills, ed., *Rethinking*. See, also: Lyons, 'Crisis'.

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in Istanbul (completed in 1755), which offered a paradigm of the Ottoman Baroque without resulting in narrow standardisation. The Ottoman Baroque remained the imperial mode for projects – from fountains and bathhouses, to funerary monuments, mosques, *madrasas*, and numerous other structures – for over a century to come.[2]

It should perhaps be of little surprise that the Baroque left an impression on the cityscape of Istanbul, for it was a cosmopolitan capital with close and long-standing contacts to the very places that gave genesis and expression to the style. It might be more remarkable to find that the Baroque left its mark in Russia, notably in St Petersburg (progenitor of the 'Petrine Baroque'), although Tsar Peter's motivations for engaging with the style were similar to those of his Ottoman counterparts: the new capital was intended to help the Romanovs stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their 'modern' Western neighbours and proclaim the dynasty's glory following their victory in the Great Northern War (1700–21).[3] It may be more remarkable still to find the Baroque in the Qing Empire, for China has all too easily (and erroneously) been labelled a closed society.[4] A set of 'European pavilions' (Xiyanglou) in the Baroque style were constructed within the Old Summer Palace (Yuanmingyuan) in Beijing at the behest of the Qianlong emperor, who also commissioned a set of twenty views of these structures in 1783. Although only the ruins stand today, due to destruction wreaked by European troops in 1860, an excellent impression of the complex is given by the copperplate engravings designed and produced by the court artist Yi Lantai, who trained under Giuseppe Castiglione, the Italian Jesuit artist at the Qing court.[5] This was 'Européenerie', the Qing counterpart to the Occidental fashion for 'chinoiserie'.[6]

Insofar as Baroque architecture was a reaction to the geometry of classicism, Bernier's description of the Taj Mahal – with all its sinuous lines and 'bizarre' layouts – celebrated the complex as a worthy exemplar for the emerging style.[7] Indeed, the encounters with India prompted by his and Tavernier's travelogues spurred French interest in seventeenth-century India in ways that shaped French Baroque design and dress.[8] What is surprising about India, despite its openness to 'foreigners' and its receptiveness of the fruits of those manifold cross-cultural exchanges described in other chapters, is the *absence* of serious engagement with the Baroque in its nascence or maturity.[9] Buildings in the style were restricted to Goa and other Portuguese settlements, although there was sufficient cross-fertilisation with local building traditions that distinctive local styles are discernible in each of the coastal regions (Konkan, Malabar, etc), while Catholic structures offered models to the architects of a handful of Hindu temples thus bearing the imprint of the Baroque.[10] By contrast to the Ottomans' expansive engagements with the style, nevertheless, artistic and architectural innovation under the later Mughals and their successors did not involve experimentation with the Baroque. Instead, contemporaries toyed with the prototypes of the Shah Jahani era.

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[2] The powerful revisionist survey of the style provided by Rüstem in *Ottoman Baroque* is the source of these points.

[3] Ibid, 160–63, for these ideas and arguments.

[4] Mosca, 'Qing', instructively surveys recent work and the empire's place in global history.

[5] Of the 200 sets distributed to imperial family members, high nobles, and foreign dignitaries, one set of *The Twenty Views of the European Palaces of the Yuanmingyuan* by Lantai Yi (c.1783–86) is now archived in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 29452:9, and is partly accessible online.

[6] Thomas, 'Yuanming Yuan/Versailles'.

[7] Beasley, 'Decentering', 32–33. On the relationship of '*bizarrerie*' to the Baroque: Hills, ed., *Rethinking*, 13.

[8] Beasley, 'Decentering'.

This neither meant an absence of innovation, nor was it the result of some failing. If the Ottoman Baroque came into being partly from the neglect of the Ottoman classical tradition, combined with the entry of fresh talent with exposure to new models, it was the more successful inter-generational reproduction of knowhow, the respect for *istiqbal*, and the codification of forms that perpetuated innovation *within* the frames set by Shah Jahani prototypes – over wholly new ones – in the Mughal world.[11] Even more significant was the *desire* for a highly historically reflexive style; this made architecture a form of history or historiography (§9.3.1). Thus, previewing wider arguments presented in this chapter, architectural historiography did not take off in the colonial period thanks to British antiquarians, for it was already established in Mughal times.[12]

This brief sketch encapsulates the three key issues examined in this chapter. First, the roles and significance of history, historical consciousness or reflexion, and historiography in the period surveyed in this book. Second, the cross-cutting themes that link India's and Indians' experience of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries to those of people in other parts of the world, to the extent that we can start to talk of 'global early modernity'. And third, the frontiers and limits of our current knowledge regarding early modern India, of global connection in times past and, ultimately, of the concept of (global) early modernity itself.

11.1 History, Historical Consciousness, and their Uses

Colonial rule did not instil a newfound historical consciousness, much as it brought few other gifts to Indians. Contrary to the fiction authored by Europeans, Indian society was not frozen in time and without history on the eve of colonialism, nor did Indians lack a notion of time and its passage, as

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[9] See, however: Koch, 'Baluster Column', on the likely impact of prints of early Counter-Reformation structures; 'Emperor Aurangzeb in a Shaft of Light' (painting attributed to Hunhar, Mughal, reign of Aurangzeb), Freer Gallery of Art Collection, Washington DC., F1996.1, central to which is a decidedly Baroque pictorial conceit – parting storm clouds pierced by celestial light.

[10] Pereira, *Baroque India*, especially 134–61, 376–88.

[11] Rüstem, *Ottoman Baroque*, 46–54.

[12] Dadlani, *From Stone*, 113–74.

Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam valuably remind us. They point to the manoeuvres integral to the making of this fiction about south Asia's pre-colonial past, including the systematic downgrading of materials to the status of mere 'myths, legends, literature, puranic stories, folklore, and phantasmagoria' from the advent of Company rule over India, as well as the performative frustration of European historians at the dearth of 'hard evidence' of the sort that might yield 'empirical data'. These processes were born of colonialism yet nurtured by the empiricist turn associated with Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), his historical methods, and his insistence on archival sources.[13]

Against this, Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subramanyam then show how historiography had, in fact, established a significant place for itself in the south Asian 'ecology of genres by the late medieval centuries'. Next, they demonstrate the significance of the period from c.1500, which 'saw the emergence of a new and specific historical awareness' and an associated upsurge in the production of works that were clearly understood to be historical – rather than fictive – by their readers/audiences, even if they appeared in genres that we might not readily classify as such.[14] These include folk-epics and courtly poetry (*kavyas*) in a range of south Asian vernacular and cosmopolitan languages sometimes sufficiently rich in historical consciousness as to be deserving to be seen as forms of historiography.[15] Thinking yet more broadly, histories of collective pasts (family, caste, clan, locality, kingdom) can be found and a historical consciousness discerned in texts and tellings for a range of audiences, from bardic performances and poetry, to prose works of world history, sometimes tucked away in manuscripts on non-historical themes but also more overtly.[16]

Knowledge of the past – being attentive to the history of a place and its peoples – was vital to the just prince.[17] History and memory, in material form, also constituted a kind of knowledge manipulated and appropriated by Indian rulers in the fabrication of their kingship and political ideology. The Mughals appropriated the royal symbols and styles of other great dynasties from the Indo-Islamicate world or the Persianate cosmopolis (§8.1–§8.2), whether or not they had legitimate grounds to do so. They were by no means singular in this regard, for the Aravidu rulers of Vijayanagara drew readily upon the legacy of the Chalukyas, a Hindu dynasty whose empire had once extended over a vast swathe of the medieval Deccan and formed part of the Sanskrit cosmopolis.[18]

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[13] Narayana Rao *et al*, *Textures of Time*, 3, for citation. See, also: Chatterjee, *Cultures*, 4–12.

[14] Narayana Rao *et al*, *Textures of Time*, 138.

[15] Others have taken this contribution to task not for its conclusions, for few would doubt that early modern Indians could be historians any more or less than their counterparts in Europe or elsewhere in the world, but instead about *how* the authors have constructed their analysis. See: Mantena, 'Questions', as well as other contributions to the overarching special issue evaluating *Textures of Time*.

[16] Guha, *History*, 50–82, offers a useful survey.

[17] Chatterjee, *Cultures*, 1.

[18] Eaton and Wagoner, *Contested Sites*, 77–89.

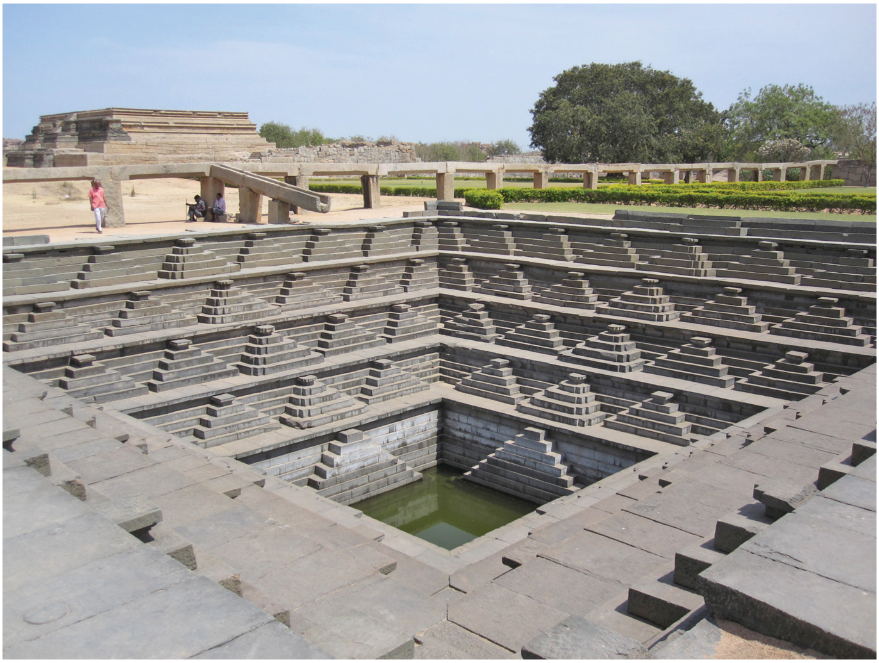

Fig. 11A Step Well in Vijayanagara's Capital

Photo: Jagjeet Lally

The Aravidus made use of Sanskrit and vernacular (Kannada, Telugu) historical works as they linked their genealogies and titles to Chalukya ones, while reworking the remnants of Chalukya buildings (e.g., temples, water tanks, and sculptures) not in any mere utilitarian fashion, but for iconic effect, something revealed by Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner's attention to both the textual record and the remains of the built environment. The individual pieces of the stunning step well pictured in Fig. 11A were labelled before being transported so that they could easily be reassembled in situ. As the Aravidus established connections to their venerable predecessors by these means, they at once also appropriated the rhetorical and visual languages of empire.[19]

And nor were they the only rulers in this part of India to do so. On the one hand, the Bijapur sultans possessed a very different heritage and hailed from a very different ecumene to the Aravidus; their ancestor was born in central Eurasia and was Shi'i, after all. On the other hand, their kingdom was a cultural melting-pot, comprising new Persian migrants, old *Dakhni* hands, *Habshis*, and countless others, but this same fact revealed the imminent danger of the polity fracturing along any of these socio-ethnic cleavages. Thus, by reworking Chalukya structures and linking Bijapur rule to Chalukya imperialism, the Bijapur sultans created an imperial ideology that transcended social conflicts yet was wholly and 'authentically indigenous'.[20] Their neighbours in Golkonda, meanwhile, were engaging with the heritage of the Kakatiyas – rulers of a major Chalukya successor state until the fourteenth century – in parallel fashion. In this we find a merging of the Persian and Sanskrit cosmopolises as part of the 'Indianisation' of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, another family whose origins lay in Persianate central Eurasia, Eaton and Wagoner argue.[21] What is forgotten is as important as what is remembered, especially when a memory or legacy is wilfully side-lined. The Marathas, for instance, were 'largely impervious to the appeal of Vijayanagara as a repository of ancestral glory', instead situating themselves and their rise within (and against) the Deccan Sultanates and the Mughal Empire.[22]

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[19] Ibid, especially 90–113.

And to cast our gaze wider still, the newfound historical awareness among early modern Indian rulers was not a uniquely Indian development. The earliest Qing rulers claimed descent from the twelfth to thirteenth-century Jin dynasty and called themselves the New Jin, for example, and also represented the Yuan dynasty – the last Mongol house to rule over China – in such a way as to make Manchu-Qing imperialism seem like its natural legacy.[23] Examples throughout this book testify to how the Safavids, Ottomans, and Habsburgs moulded and manipulated the Classical inheritance and that of more recent times, lore as well as legend, in the formulation of imperial ideology. Yet, it was not only emperors and the chief architects of their imperial projects who profited from retelling and even reworking the past. 'Tudor England', Lucy Wooding writes, 'was deeply preoccupied with its own historical past.'[24] This is hardly surprising: the global Renaissances and Reformations of the fourteenth century onward were either rooted in the engagement with older forms of knowledge or encouraged deep historical reflexion in the face of novelty and rupture (see, for instance: §2.5, §3.3.5). Add to this the rise of Indian vernaculars in the early modern period, a process that often necessitated the emulation/appropriation of the forms and genres of Classical languages (§9.2).

History was put to other uses, too. In villages, towns, and cities, Indians were asked to bear witness to the transfer of property and other legal undertakings, local elites signifying their rank by including their title, while the illiterate asked neighbours to sign on their behalf, others still making little pictures or designs on the page that represented their trades or caste identities.[25] Of itself, this may not have been novel. But the early modern centuries saw the intensification of contests over caste privileges and customary entitlements thanks to steady commercialisation and subinfeudation in tandem with the state's greater intrusiveness, both in terms of its revenue demands and *qanunisation*, so that plaintiffs made greater recourse to the courts from Mughal Bengal to the Maratha country (§7.3.3).[26] Regime change in the eighteenth century variously imperilled one's existing privileges or presented the bold with an opportunity to daringly pass off as long-standing entirely new and unprecedented claims, in any case putting an even greater premium on memory and records. Thus, we find parties bringing forth artefacts like stone markers and copperplates as well as paper records, while also presenting to the authorities key witnesses willing to testify to the veracity of so-and-so's claims to proprietary rights or ritual entitlements having been made or renewed in (living) memory.[27] 'That credible narratives depended on evidence was an idea widely diffused' in early modern India, Sumit Guha writes.[28]

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[20] Ibid, 126 for citation, and 125–56, where the analysis is attentive to the changing causes and deepening character of successive sultans' engagement with the Chalukya idiom.

[21] Ibid, 204, for citation, and 203–30 for analysis.

[22] Guha, 'Frontiers of Memory', citation from 274.

[23] Crossley, *The Manchus*, 12, 133, 144–46.

[24] Wooding, *Tudor England*, here 4, and *passim*.

[25] Hasan, 'Property and Social Relations'. Guha, *History*, 97–104, examines subaltern historical consciousness more carefully than can be described here.

By turns unsettling and affording creativity and reinvention, changing times have often been the crucible of tradition. Individuals or groups might remould the past to create traditions and (collective) identities, placing themselves within the cannon or situating themselves against or apart from their forebears. In the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for instance, the production of poetic compendia or *tazkiras* – hardly a new genre – was booming for this very reason.[29] Chandar Bhan Brahman, the Mughal state secretary and Persian litterateur and writer *par excellence*, whom we have encountered repeatedly (see, especially: §7.2.3, §10.1–§10.2), naturally featured in many of these compendia, making the poet-historian himself the subject of history.[30] Musical artistes and their patrons, likewise, gave form to tradition against the backdrop of canonisation and invention (§9.3.3). Lineage was crucial for many professional groups, be they weavers or merchants, but it signified more than training and skill, trustworthiness and reputation, for artists, musicians, writers, and religious figures. Lineage meant being part of a saintly *silsila* and the authority that came with it, consequently being as important among Sufis as it was for Sikh leaders after the death of Guru Arjan.

Imperial rivalries, sectarian conflict, and the increasingly crowded and competitive marketplace for salvation together explain why the early moderns turned ever increasingly to the historical mode.[31] The *Nanak Janamsakhis*, hagiographies of Mira Bai and other *bhaktas*, and histories of the different Vaishnava *sampradayas* were as much for the edification of readers/listeners as they were crystallisations of new traditions and communities.[32] For Hindus and Sikhs, time was cyclical and the Kali Yuga was nigh, ideas contemporaries engaged with to justify their reluctance to invest Shivaji Bhonsle as a Kshatriya king (§2.1.2) and to make clear Gobind's role as a leader and protector at the advent of *dharamyudh* (§2.4.4, §6.3.2). For Muslims awaiting the start of the new millennium in the late sixteenth century, hopes might rest on a messiah-like figure, to the extent that Muslim sultans – and their rivals and critics in equal measure – drew strength from their promises of ushering in a great renewal during what now appears to have been a broader age of apocalyptic and chiliastic thinking across much of Eurasia (§3.3.5, §8.3). Merging dynastic history with Muslim history or the history of Indian kingship, Indo-Persianate scholars bent the past to their masters' service.[33]

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[26] See, also: O'Hanlon, Venkatkrishnan, and Williams, 'Scribal Service', 445.

[27] O'Hanlon, 'Performance'; O'Hanlon, 'Petitioning'.

[28] Guha, *History*, here 93, and 83–117, for an instructive discussion.

[29] Kinra, *Writing*, 11–13, valuably pauses to consider *tazkiras* as a kind of source for the study of literary modernity and the under-utilisation of this particular archive.

[30] Ibid, 240–85.

[31] On the imprint of imperial rivalries on historiography in the Ottoman context, see: Şahin, *Empire and Power*, especially 157–85.

Others looked to the present to shape their future, serving themselves and their masters at a single stroke. Take, for instance, those Brahmans and Jains who worked to produce the Sanskrit-Persian translations in Akbar and Jahangir's courts (§3.3.3). They put pen to paper, offering praise to the Mughals, sometimes creatively re-casting the foundations of Mughal rule, at the same time recording their time in imperial service for posterity. In the case of those Jains banished from court, this involved 'setting the record wrong' in numerous ways, as Audrey Truschke aptly puts it.[34] Again, what we find in early modern India – the increasingly polemical force of historical writing among religious and political communities – was in keeping with developments in, say, the Tudor realm and was thus apiece with the bigger picture.[35] As the examples discussed so far make clear, furthermore, the appeal to the past, the employment of the historical mode, and the creation of historiography in south Asia was not an exclusively Persian(ate) enterprise, for it flourished in many languages (e.g., Sankrit, Braj, Bengali), not to mention a range of registers, genres, and even via non-textual means (e.g., oral culture, architecture or the built environment as the fabric of space-time), among a wide range of actors from all corners of Indian society.[36] In fact, as Kumkum Chatterjee showed us, there was much cross-fertilisation between the Persianate and the Bengali, political and literary culture, trans-local *tarikhs* and vernacular genres such as *mangalkavya* in the making of history in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Bengal.[37]

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[32] Compare this with fifteenth and sixteenth-century Ottoman historiography, which was also concerned with defining who was Ottoman and what the Ottoman state was: Çipa and Fetvaci, eds., *Writing History*.

[33] See, also: Anooshahr, 'Mughal Historians', here especially 298–99.

[34] Truschke, 'Setting the Record Wrong'.

[35] Wooding, *Tudor England*, 5.

[36] See, further: O'Hanlon, '"Premodern" Pasts'.

[37] Chatterjee, *Cultures*.

Just as important in animating this historical consciousness, perhaps, was a sense of pessimism, danger, or loss. Anxieties regarding time's passage to a new era were not only to do with the Kali Yuga or the Islamic millennium. Contemporaries also worried about the corruption and decay that had beset the Mughal imperium, or else profited from declinist talk, be they courtiers or figures like Ahmad Shah Durrani and Shah Wali Allah. They also felt a mixture of pride and a sense of loss, which sometimes manifested in a nostalgic mode, as in the case of urban-cum-family histories that notables began producing toward the end of our period (§4.3.2). The power of history and the fear of a cherished world slipping away combined to give impetus to archiving, from the preservation of deeds and documents by humbler folk, to the creation of grand royal libraries (§10.3) – sometimes by the appropriation or absorption of entire extant collections – by the Mughals, the scions of the Kacchwaha house, and Tipu Sultan, to draw but a few examples from previous chapters. History was – and remains – a site of creativity and contestation, not least when memory involves (real or imagined) hurt that mutates into grievance. How we choose to retell the history of Islam in India or narrate the experience of Muslim rule (see, especially: §3.1.1, §3.2, §3.3.4), for instance, might depend on feelings of hurt or grievance and the value to be gained from deploying or denying these emotions.

We have explored the origins and impact of the metaphor of the globe in European and Indian visual culture (§8.4), so it bears noting that early modern globalisation inevitably shaped contemporary historiographical practice, too. What made the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries an 'explosive conjunctural moment in relation to the changing conventions of history-writing', to Sanjay Subrahmanyam's mind, was 'the rise to prominence of the innovative form of "world history," which is to say history-writing on a world scale.'[38] As the continents became more connected, so historical production took on new aims and significances in a wide range of locales, including south Asia.[39] The historical mode, and the pervasiveness of a new kind of historical consciousness, were not only defining features of the early modern world. They also form a bridge between older, overlapping categories like Renaissance or Reformation and the notion of the early modern, while also linking developments previously seen as uniquely European (or only examined in that context) with those elsewhere. What other cross-cutting themes can be discerned in what has been presented in the previous chapters?

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[38] Subrahmanyam, 'World Historians', 28, for citation, and *passim*.

[39] Compare with: Marcocci, *Globe on Paper*, which examines the brief moment in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when something like 'global history' came to be produced, and thus forces us to reckon with the changing nature and impact of historical production over time.

11.2 Early Modernity and Global History

Seeing the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries not as the beginnings of the 'northern Renaissance', but as the final stage of the Middle Ages, Johann Huizinga famously employed the metaphor of a fruit tree to explain his perspective. 'Old forms of civilisation', he wrote, 'die off at the same time and in the same soil in which the new finds the nourishment to blossom.'[40] Over in the south, in Italy's city-states and republics, a Renaissance might already have been underway, but in his survey of the Burgundian lands he found:

> medieval civilisation in the last tide of its life, as a tree with overripe fruit, fully developed and mature. The rampant growth of old, compelling forms of thought over the living core of the idea, the withering and stiffening of a rich civilisation[41]

He called this period the *Herfsttij*, which can be translated as 'autumntide'.[42] Huizinga's magisterial work remains valuable for scholars of northern European history, yet it is also a valuable way of thinking about ideas central to this book. In the grander scheme of things, he challenged the view of those numerous innovations of the painter Jan van Eyck's time as constitutive of a so-called Netherlandish Renaissance and, ultimately, of the very utility of the Renaissance as a concept. In all the manifold novelty of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that scholars were – and still are – wont to overidentify, seeing it all as marking a break with the past, Huizinga saw merely the encrustation of old ideas.

Huizinga was writing long before the advent of 'early modern' as a period label, which emerged out of Anglophone scholarship rather than his native Dutch, in any case.[43] Incidentally, the English had started using the terms 'modern' and 'society' by the sixteenth century, but they did not call their own society 'early modern', they did not use the term 'early modern', and they would not have understood what was meant by the term 'early modern' as we employ it today. According to Phil Withington, the first use of the term can be traced to a published lecture by William Johnson delivered at Cambridge in 1869. It did not become widespread until the 1940s, however, when it also took on a very particular meaning among economic historians interested in the prelude to the Industrial Revolution. Only in the 1970s, thanks to the work of social historians – most notably, Keith Thomas ('Age of Authority in Early Modern

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[40] Huizinga, *Autumntide*, 3.

[41] Ibid, 3.

[42] See: Small, 'Epilogue', for Huizinga's agony over how to title his thesis and his translators' anxiety about how to best render the Dutch in English.

[43] Starn, 'Muddle', explains why continental European scholars had no need for 'early modern' until recently.

England', 1976), Natalie Zemon Davis (*Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 1975), and Peter Burke (*Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 1972; *Economy and Society in Early Modern Europe*, 1978) – did the term become more widespread and come to be used to define a period of several centuries that were witness to a whole host of changes.[44]

Huizinga's criticisms are a reminder of the limitations of trying to apply period labels – the Renaissance, in his case. On the one hand, the idea of early modernity has not supplanted or assimilated such overlapping terms as the Renaissance, Reformation, or Enlightenment.[45] On the other, some scholars prefer it to the Renaissance, say, because it is broader and less Eurocentric.[46] Ayesha Ramachandran observes that it invites – perhaps even compels us – toward 'seeing in the same frame', thereby forcing us to reckon with the coexistence of Petrarch, the so-called father of the Renaissance, and the great Persian writer known by his *nom-de-plume*, Hafez ('memoriser' or 'safekeeper').[47] At the same time, this very openness and expansiveness is also a limiting feature, for what – if anything – gives the 'early modern' coherence as a concept? And once we break out of Europe and begin to compare developments across the globe, as this book has sought to do, is it possible to agree on a periodisation and set of defining features characteristic of early modernity at large? Or do we possess yet another concept that does not travel well, appearing in some places earlier or later (or never), like the Renaissance in Huizinga's analysis?

11.2.1 Themes

As the early moderns rediscovered the learning of the ancients – often via the Muslim world – so they experienced a rebirth and the feeling of novelty and innovation that came with it. As their familiarity with faraway places and peoples grew, so their feeling exceptional or unique might have been blunted, where their sense of self and their place in the world was not, in fact, sharpened.[48] Such is the rosy portrait of Europe and Europeans, but let us consider other parts of the world.

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[44] Withington, *Society*, 45–70. See, also: Bhargava and Nath, 'Introduction', 17–19.

[45] A little over two decades old, and thus a little dated, Starn's 'Muddle' nevertheless remains a good guide to some of the issues at stake.

[46] Alternately, one could conceive of and explore the many renaissances witnessed across time and space, in turn helping to cut the (European, singular) Renaissance down to size; see: Goody, *Renaissances*.

[47] Ramachandran, paper presented at the roundtable on 'Is there a Global Early Modern?', Institute of Historical Research, London, 7 February 2022. The event was held to mark the publication of a set of essays on the 'multiplicities' of the global early modern in *Modern Philology*, vol. 119, no. 1 (2021), of which Ramachandran was co-editor. *C.f.*, Strathern, 'Global Early Modernity', 326–27.

[48] Marcocci, *Globe on Paper*.

India's different regions were already connected to one another and, in turn, with other parts of the Indian Ocean or Islamicate worlds, with states and markets strung along the terrestrial Silk Roads, and even with the Frankish lands to the west – albeit not via the Cape of Good Hope – long before 1498 (§1.3.1, §5.3.1).[49] Occidental breakout was precisely that: a backward and secluded part of the world discovering people and places that were already well-integrated or in regular contact (§1.3.2, §10.4). Or to put it differently, the arrival of the Europeans in Asian waters in 1498 was a landmark event from a European perspective. But its impacts in the East – and there *were* impacts, as this book has shown – were slower to come about or subtle, usually more palpable where they ramped up existing trends. Because they had not lost touch with classical learning, furthermore, so Indians may not have experienced a Renaissance in the period covered in this book. But there *was* a humanistic turn in Persian-, Sanskrit-, and vernacular-language works, indicative of how Indians were curious and cosmopolitan, even if not quite in ways resembling European cosmopolitanism/humanism (and why should they be so?).[50]

We no longer conceive of *early* modernity as a clearing house for the world that developed in the nineteenth century, instead taking the period on its own terms. That said, historians do continue to split hairs over the *modern(ity)* part of 'early modern(ity)' and its paradigmatic Eurocentricity.[51] Alan Strathern notes, however, that many historians of Asia have been willing to 'suppress certain epistemological qualms' arising from engaging *with* early modernity as a concept, chiefly because 'the pay-off is an innovative reconsideration of the dynamic potential of non-western societies in the period immediately before the arrival of full-blown European imperialism in the nineteenth century threw all others off course by imposing its own reductive brand of modernity across the board.'[52] A corollary of this is that we can think of multiple early modernities, even as they may have been interlinked or born of connections.[53] Another way of dealing with the thorny problem of 'modernity' is to look into contemporaries' *mentalités*, asking whether and to what extent they felt that they were living in new or changing times. Did Indians feel this way?

Let us return to the Kali Yuga, which shaped Hindu and Sikh thought and made its appearance in numerous genres. Thinkers had long been employing this concept in a bid to 'make sense of times that they considered particularly corrupt and debased.' Thus, its appearance in early modern discourse does not, of itself, signal the feeling of a break with the past and the entry into a new era; the Kali Yuga was already in train, at least to some minds. And yet, the causes of contemporaries' disquiet *do* reveal a feeling that times were changing, often quite suddenly. Among their concerns, Rosalind O'Hanlon notes, was the ease with which people could change their modes of life – thanks to urban growth and imperial expansion – in ways that unsettled the moral order. Caste was not respected due to the prosperity and social mobility associated with commercialisation, enterprise, and new livelihoods, resulting in new marriage partnerships (i.e., those outside one's *jati* and *varna*). 'Many rulers were Turks and Yavanas, or local country upstarts', O'Hanlon summarises, whom contemporaries felt they could not rely upon 'to maintain the *varnas* in orderly separation.' Overall, there was a great 'mixing-up of peoples'; some intellectuals deemed the consequence to be the collapse of the four-fold *varna*, with only Brahmans and Shudras remaining, as the sages foretold when they prophesied the advent of the Kali Yuga.[54]

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[49] See, also: Strathern, 'Global Early Modernity', 319–20.

[50] Khera, *Moods*, 22, who draws upon Mana Kia's recent work.

[51] See, usefully: O'Hanlon, 'Contested Conjunctures', 765–67, and *passim*.

[52] Strathern, 'Global Early Modernity', 328, for citation, and 327–30.

[53] This endeavour is not without its problems and critics; see, e.g.: van der Veer, 'Modernity'.

Upon stepping back and surveying what we have explored in this book, we might collect the manifold experiences of early modernity under two broad headings or themes. The first relates to identity and expression. The early moderns had a newfound sense of their place in space-time, from those with a heightened or novel historical consciousness, to those Indian thinkers identifying in their perceptions of change the advent of the Kali Yuga. The challenge to orthodoxy posed by Bhakti and its emphasis on direct devotional encounter (§2.1.1, but see also: §2.2.1 on devotionalism in Sufi Islam and §2.4 on the Sants and Sikhs), the development of (spoken) vernaculars into fully literised languages that competed with classical/cosmopolitan ones (§9.2), and the more general search for local ways of making culture in an increasingly globalised world, not to mention their impact in turn on, say, Sufi Islam, are all key in this regard.[55] So, too, is the *response* of elite groups to these 'challenges' (as they often viewed them), which *sharpened* Brahman intellectuals' sense of identity and privilege.[56] There seems to be more than sufficient evidence that Indian elites were self-aware and becoming more so over time: they took pains over their self-fashioning, they penned (auto)biographical works or else explored their inner selves in texts (§10.2) and probably out in public space, too, and they propounded or embodied new notions of individual agency through their dissenting discourse.[57] As for commoners, their individuality might remain hidden behind the barricades erected by communities defined by caste, occupation, language, or ethnicity, but these same communities were also finding their political voice (§4.2.4), and the ways in which the state was made from below (§7.3) or increasingly reflected local identities (§7.4, §9.2) from the late seventeenth century is also telling.

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[54] O'Hanlon, 'Social Worth', 568, for citations. See, for other dimensions of how contemporaries began 'periodising': O'Hanlon, 'Contested Conjunctures', 768.

[55] On this last, see: Ghani, 'Sufism', 50–53.

[56] See, for instance: O'Hanlon, 'Contested Conjunctures', 778–86.

[57] On this last, see: Jain, 'Individualism'. See, further: Rizvi, 'Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity', for fascinating new work on 'art as affect' and the representation of the self in/through non-textual media/means.

These last examples can be linked to the increasing power and reach of the law and the greater legalism evident from the sixteenth century in the Tudor or Ottoman realms and from the later seventeenth century in the Mughal lands.[58] The strengthening of the state's legal institutions and the recourse to litigation by subjects took place, in turn, within the context of wider and deeper commercialisation as well as an uptick in mobility linked to the intensification of globalisation, which forms our second cross-cutting theme. These processes fuelled disputes over property rights (§4.2.3, §5.1.2) as well as, more importantly, the competition over land and its resources (§5.1). The former might be resolved in law courts whereas the latter more often simply led to the trashing of marginal groups' rights (e.g., forest dwellers, migratory peoples), with the accompanying transformation of the environment paving the way to the Anthropocene.[59] Their impact was imbricated, moreover, with bureaucratic centralisation (§7.2.3), the elaboration of paper-based record-keeping and scribal cultures, and the rise (or empowerment) of new scribal groups (§7.3.3, §10.1) – but also, therefore, with imperial expansion, the evolution of markets for violence (§6.1), and military competition (although this last had its limits; see: §6.4). They supported the development of capitalism, but this was not necessarily at odds with either the continued use of enslaved labour and the growth and growing complexity of the long-distance slave trade (§5.2.2), or with mercantilism (§5.4.3).

Who most felt the impact of the greater circulation of goods, people, and ideas, the greater connection of places near and far, and the greater intrusion of the market? On the one hand, these processes supported urbanisation (§4.1.1–§4.1.2), and it is no surprise that consumer society and the new forms of sociability (§4.3.1) were more often urban than rural phenomena, notwithstanding the fact that town and country were probably more blended than we have previously imagined. On the other hand, as the examples summarised here stand to show, few were left untouched as their lifeways or else their relationship to political authority was transformed in early modern times. When thinking about people's beliefs, furthermore, the market does not merely offer a metaphor for the increasingly competitive space in which people sought or supplied the path to salvation; commercial metaphors also pervaded one of the early modern period's new religions – Sikhism – whose first leader was born into a mercantile-cum-scribal caste and who initially found a following among fellow Khatris (§3.4). We might also note the impact on kingship; namely, the reinvigoration of universalism (§8.4). And, more broadly, connection and circulation were important to the (re)discovery of knowledge, including via translation (§3.1.1, §3.3.3, §10.2–§10.3). All these features were in evidence in other parts of the world, too, indicating areas of commonality or convergence.[60] Altogether, this helps explain why the idea of global early modernity has gained such traction, for it has the 'capacity to capture the connective flux of these centuries.'[61]

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[58] Wooding, *Tudor England*, 78.

[59] See, further: Bhargava, 'Prism'.

[60] For more on 'connected histories' and 'unifying features': Subrahmanyam, 'Reconfiguration'.

11.2.2 Horizons

Huizinga may have deemed fifteenth-century Burgundian literature and art in their autumn-tide, with change occurring within the confines of medieval forms so that, for instance, the poets spun 'a never-ending postlude on threadbare themes'.[62] Yet, in the same analysis, he was incredibly attentive to the very different temporalities of change in different cultural forms (first in literature, then art, in his view), not to mention how change unfolded at a variable pace across the varied spheres of intellectual, religious, and social life.[63] We can apply this logic to our periodisation of early modernity: art historians and literary scholars, economic historians and historians of science will each come to different conclusions about when early modernity began and ended, because the spirit of the age was probably crystallised in different media, institutions, ideas, or practices at different times. Huizinga's contrast of Italy, where the Renaissance was in motion from the fourteenth century, with the Burgundian lands, which was still stuck in the Middle Ages in van Eyck's time, is also instructive in another respect. How we define the early modern also depends on *where* we are looking: certain regions or states might have experienced key changes earlier than others, while ports and cities often heralded the new long before its impact was felt in the countryside or hinterland towns. And this is to say nothing of the idiosyncrasy of certain aspects of modernity and paths toward it in particular places.

Here, recent scholarship on the Ottoman Empire is instructive. Take, first of all, scholars like Daniel Goffman and Giancarlo Casale, who have been preoccupied with the empire's exchanges and rivalries with European states – particularly in the Mediterranean arena – during the Ottoman classical age. They not only find evidence of the Ottomans being shaped by the currents of European early modernity, but also of the Ottomans being sufficiently influential as to have played a part in affecting developments in Europe, in either respect aligning Ottoman early modernity with the European ur-narrative that begins in the fifteenth century.[64] Baki Tezcan, however, locates the departure of the Ottoman state from the forms of the medieval kingdom – and thus a key moment of transition toward political modernity – in the context of numerous crises experienced from the late sixteenth century, his analysis aligning with certain western European trends and developments in the same period, even as his periodisation of the 'early modern' is a little more compact as a result.[65] By contrast, Virginia Aksan situates the Ottomans vis-à-vis their southern and eastern European neighbours (the Habsburgs and Romanovs), in this context identifying a key moment of transition and the onset of early modernity in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[66] In a seminal guide to *The Early Modern Ottomans*, Goffman and Aksan define the empire's early modern period with reference to key milestones – the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the onset of the reform era in 1839 – for this allows them to accommodate all of these diverse analyses and the different periodisations to which they give rise.[67]

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[61] Strathern, 'Global Early Modernity', 319, for citation, and 324–25, for a list of some of the features most associated with this period, which are not dissimilar from what has been distilled, here.

[62] Huizinga, *Autumntide*, 415.

[63] Ibid, 413–15.

[64] Goffman, *Ottoman Empire*; Casale, *Ottoman Age*.

For all the differences of perspective, Ottomanists *have* successfully integrated Ottoman history into the frames of (European) early modernity – so much so, in fact, that Ottoman history now seems out of kilter with global history and the challenge to Eurocentricity that the global turn has renewed with greater fierceness.[68] Of course, not all global historians are alike. At one extreme, we might place Jack Goldstone, for whom the entire project guiding the designation of a period of a few centuries as early modern is unquestionably Eurocentric, with the concept becoming meaningless when watered down to render it useful to places beyond Europe.[69] At the other, Victor Lieberman identifies a 'mix of accelerating territorial consolidation, greater institutional sophistication, state-focused acculturation, rising literacy, and commercial intensification' in numerous locales from c. 1450 or 1500 until about c. 1800 that merits the term early modern, even as he is clear that this was just one cycle in a longer-term development lasting over a millennium.[70]

Several leading historians of the Qing Empire have expressed their ambivalence toward 'early modernity': it helps them deal with some long-standing problems of periodisation in Chinese history, and it supports the separate project of setting China within larger and less parochial contexts of analysis, be they regional or global, yet the problems of [modernity = Eurocentric] and [early = teleological] continue to give them pause.[71] Indian historians have perhaps been less troubled by these issues because their standard periodisations were already inherently Eurocentric or Eurotropic: ancient times, a medieval and/or pre-colonial period, followed by the advent of modernity upon the colonial transition.[72] There were no Renaissances or Enlightenments to break up the risibly long medieval era, the tail-end of which is nowadays being reconceived as early modern. This peculiar way of dividing historical time was bolstered by the Marxist bent of postwar scholarship, as well as a long-standing elision of colonialism with modernity (and modernity with progress and, ergo, colonialism with progress).[73]

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[65] Tezcan, *Second Ottoman Empire*.

[66] Aksan, 'Locating'.

[67] Aksan and Goffman, 'Introduction', 2. Aksan has also co-edited a special issue of the *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* entitled 'Chasing the Ottoman Early Modern' (2020) that is instructive.

[68] Markiewicz, 'Europeanist Trends'.

[69] Goldstone, 'Problem'.

[70] See, especially: Lieberman, *Strange Parallels,* vol. i, 70; Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. ii, 206–07.

[71] Struve, ed., *Qing Formation*, especially the chapters by Evelyn Rawski, Jack Goldstone, Jonathan Hay, and Lynn Struve.

Thus, using 'early modern' has been productive for historians of south Asia in several respects. First, to help distinguish what is different about, for instance, the worlds of the later Delhi and Deccan sultanates or the Vijayanagara and Mughal empires from what preceded them; these states and societies are no longer seen as the mere pinnacle (or 'overripe fruit', *pace* Huizinga) of the very long Middle Ages.[74] Second, to break with the narrowly economistic frames of Marxist analysis (§5.1, §7.1), as scholars have sought to expand their horizons and make sense of cultural, social, and intellectual phenomena or processes. Finally, to break the link between colonialism and progress, which has been dispatched to the dustbin once and for all not only by postcolonial scholarship and the impact of Postcolonial theory, but also by retrieving and examining – on its own terms – the advent of modernity in the last pre-colonial centuries.

This *early* or pre-colonial path to modernity was in some ways distinctive or idiosyncratic, but in other respects comparable to the forms and trajectories witnessed elsewhere, including – but not limited to – Europe. Reflexively – and this is significant – thinking about south Asia's place within the early modern world has helped provincialize Europe, which consequently seems less special, its peoples and states no more a font of dynamism than their counterparts further afield. The world of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries was witness to multipolar and (multiply) convergent modernities, therefore, even if convergence was not with Europe but some other important pole – not least India, which became a fulcrum of the Persianate world in the early modern centuries (§9.1), besides its prominent place within the Indian Ocean arena.[75] That said, we ought also to be willing to admit that novelty did not always spell modernity, and some divergences probably also deserve closer attention.[76] There were also cases where India(ns) played an accidental or inadvertent role in shaping global phenomena, or 'gave' more than was 'received', as in the case of the (French) Baroque. Ultimately, thinking globally is productive and has given credence to the early modern – and even the global early modern – as a period label.

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[72] A detailed discussion of how and why this emerged, has been reinforced over time, and has variously been mobilised by historians down to recent times is offered by: Bhargava and Nath, 'Introduction', 6–12.

[73] On the latter, see: Bhargava and Nath, 'Introduction', 1–3.

[74] Bhargava and Nath, 'Introduction', 27, for some of the main ideas in this paragraph.

[75] See, above: n. 47. See, also: Subrahmanyam, 'Reconfiguration'.

[76] Bhargava and Nath, 'Introduction', 30.

This book opened with Timur's conquest of India because it triggered processes that explain, among much else, the transformation of the later Delhi Sultanate, the rise of the Mughal imperium, and the content and character of Mughal imperial ideology and culture.[77] 1398 is not taken as marking the start of the early modern period – which would be absurd – and this book has sometimes looked over a longer horizon to make sense of certain developments. Both the refreshing of India's classical/cosmopolitan languages and the process of vernacularisation, for example, have been set within the *longue durée* dictated by the Sanskrit and Persian cosmopolises (§9.1–§9.2).[78] By the same turn, and in keeping with other scholars, it has also focussed on developments from the sixteenth century or over the seventeenth century where appropriate. This might seem slippery and unsatisfactory, but it is also a reminder that every period label has its limits; for it to be meaningful, a term like 'early modern' also needs to be used carefully and flexibly. At the same time, this book makes clear that dates like 1498 – the year of Vasco da Gama's landing on Indian soil – do not mark watersheds; the Europeans' arrival in the Indian Ocean world did little to transform India's place in global networks overnight, even as it added a new dimension and had importance in time.[79]

This book closes in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, in the years between Nadir Shah's invasion of 1739 (§1.3.3, §7.4), on the one hand, and the so-called colonial transition, on the other. This may not only seem conventional; it also runs the risk of eliding early modernity in south Asia with Mughal rule while reifying the idea of colonialism as a kind of rupture. After all, so much scholarship of the past forty years or more has advocated for the continuities between the pre-colonial and early-colonial eras lasting until the early nineteenth century, even though most scholars agree that colonialism thwarted Indian states' and societies' various paths toward modernity (or else simply put an end to developments underway in the preceding centuries).[80] At the same time, by offering a wide-ranging survey and retaining an open-ended approach to the period's 'start' and 'end' dates, *India and the Early Modern World* suggests that such developments or phenomena as, for instance, the growth of civic spirit and associated forms of urban literature (§4.3) had a relatively belated advent in south Asia compared to Japan and many parts of Europe. To this can be added the emergence of consumer society (§5.5) and political society (§4.2.4). Thus, even points of similarity between India's experience and those in other parts of the world were not necessarily 'convergences', this book shows, for they were not always synchronous.

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[77] Strathern, 'Global Early Modernity', 320, evaluates other scholars who have done something similar.

[78] See, also: Asher and Talbot, *India*, 5–6.

[79] Strathern, 'Global Early Modernity', 321–24, offers a useful appraisal of fixing upon 1492 or 1498.

[80] See, for instance: Alavi, ed., *Eighteenth-Century*; Marshall, ed., *Eighteenth Century*.

11.3 Limitations and Future Directions

Championed by the Levellers, by remarkable and energetic campaigners like Katherine Chidley, and by such women as the female signatories of the 'The Women's Petition' (1651) to Cromwell, the period of the English Civil War (1642–51) saw a questioning of the constraints on women's lives as part of the – sometimes radical – reimagination of what society might be.[81] This challenge to what we might call the patriarchy largely came to nought, however, for the Cromwellian Protectorate was far from a radical break with the past. Yet, in another sense, this challenge encapsulates how women's lives and roles were changing in the early modern period, both in England and probably many other parts of the world, too. There was no revolution, yet women were becoming more vocal and visible and their roles were becoming more expansive. Thus, wealthy women remained a source of charitable bequests and artistic and cultural patronage, but probably on a larger scale due to the economic expansion and ratcheting up of the state's power since medieval times. They continued to run businesses, but the birth of consumer society enlarged the scope for women in setting fashions and in guiding the character and pace of change in the household and its associated material culture. There remained limits on what a (respectable) woman could do with her life, not least by virtue of withholding from her an education equal to that of a man of similar rank, but certain restrictions were lifted (on women in England following the Restoration, for example).

A combination of print and vernacularisation supported women's learning and their entry into the Republic of Letters, to the extent that female readers were represented in artworks, with some women even shooting to fame as artists and writers in their own right in western Europe. Was an Aphra Behn or Artemisia Gentileschi to be found in early modern India? Probably not. Purdah was not an unimpeachable barrier, but restrictions on elite women's entry into certain social spaces limited their active and equal participation in society and political debate. Mughal women of means could fund overseas voyages and the erection of marvellous buildings, they could consult books in the imperial library and discourse with specialists in religious and legal thought, influence politics and occasionally take the reins of the state (§7.2.2), but was their sphere of activity anything other than a parallel sphere or world-within-a-world to the one shaped and inhabited by men? Might the wives and daughters of gentry, merchants, *qazis*, and other middling sorts have been likewise constrained – or might they, in fact, have been somewhat freer?[82] Might the gendered experience have been more sharply or loosely drawn in early modern India, and was it changing more slowly or rapidly than in other parts of the world? Airing these questions is an important step toward finding out whether or not they can be satisfactorily answered. Among other topics about which this book has said little or nothing are crime and punishment; health and disease; food; fashion and dress; drama and performance; (natural) philosophy; marriage, reproduction, and the family; and sexuality.

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[81] Lincoln, *London*, especially 123–24, 138–39.

[82] Compare with the freedoms, albeit exaggerated, of women described in the *Zennaname*, an Ottoman work by Fazil Enderuni (d. 1810): Rüstem, *Ottoman Baroque*, 26.

So much for the limits to what we know about early modern India, but what about the limits of global early modernity? There were, of course, rather literal limits or frontiers: the limited impact of the Baroque, for example, or the blockages in the circulation of scientific knowledges within Europe that had knock-on effects for knowledge transmission between Europe and India in at least one instance (§10.5); the lack of convergence or commonality arising out of differing endowments or starting-points, such as the absence of guilds or powerful corporate institutions in Indian cities relative to other places, with implications for urban culture (§4.2.4–§4.4); the continuing importance of near neighbours and regional arenas of circulation and exchange, not to mention the strengthening of locality, each to the detriment of uniformity or synchronicity at the global level; but also the roads simply not travelled and the places that were left behind, for one reason or another.

At the more conceptual level, too, global early modernity may be limiting – if not rather limited. Allyson Poska has recently denounced global early modernity as classicist; sexist, in the sense of being defined as a world of *male* priorities; and elitist, because even if this or that place experienced or was on a path to modernity, it probably mattered little to the mass of society.[83] Although this is perhaps a little unfair based on what we have touched upon in this book, Poska's proposal that we consider the term from an intersectional perspective is a valuable one. We might take a radically different approach, as Alexandra Walsham takes to the Reformation, and study change over time via the dialogue between 'generations'.[84] Rather than thinking in terms of 'early modernity' or a Mughal 'classical age', we might conceive of the '*sulh-i kull* generation' (§3.3.4) comprising such men as Chandar Bhan Brahman, to propose but one example. A complementary step toward greater inclusivity might be to focus more closely on the family; this book has repeatedly shown the family to be an important unit, from princely households (§7.3.1) and scholar households (§10.3), to the role of family and kin in education/training or inter-generational knowledge transfer (§10.1), the functioning of the bureaucracy (§7.2.3, §7.3.3), and long-distance exchange (§5.3.3), as well as the family and kinship as both a problem and a solution to the architects of early modern empire (§7.1.1, §7.2.1).

Of course, the early modern centuries were a time of both 'the local and the global, the connected and the confined, the cosmopolitan and the parochial', as Rosalind O'Hanlon puts it.[85] These binaries do not neatly map onto one another, she makes clear, for it was not merely the ‘local’ or ‘parochial’ that found itself ‘confined’, ‘disconnected’, or otherwise cut off from the sorts of developments we have examined in this book. Rather than casting the notion of global early modernity out of hand, therefore, we might begin to acknowledge and explore the difficult to grasp, unwanted, or unsavoury consequences of circulation, connectivity, and marketised exchange, of (some) people finding their voice and articulating a sharper sense of their identity.[86] Widening inequality between the rich and poor nations, or else within nations, linked to neoliberalism and globalisation *today* should put into perspective any emphasis on the boons of connectivity in times *past*. What, then, about those individuals or groups who fell behind or lost out in early modern times? What about divergences, either great or small? And what of the weak?

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[83] Poska, paper presented at the roundtable on 'Is there a Global Early Modern?', Institute of Historical Research, London, 7 February 2022.

[84] Walsham, *Generations*.

[85] O'Hanlon, 'Early Modern in South Asia', 161, and *passim*, for a review essay focussing on several important recent works in the field.

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[86] For moves in this direction made in this book, see, for instance: §5.5.

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